Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film

Diversity in Unity

DAVID HANAN

MONASH
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Cover illustration: Garin Nugroho and crew filming a scene for *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (English title: 'And the Moon Dances'), SET Film Workshop and National Film Council, 1995. (Courtesy of Garin Nugroho)

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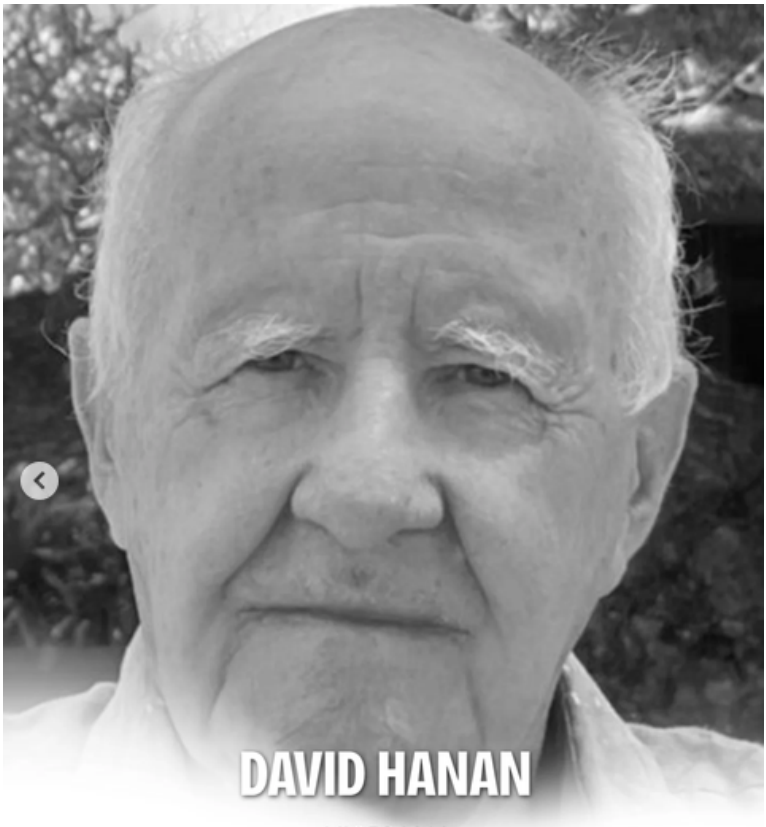

DAVID HANAN

AUSTRALIA

David researched film in Indonesia since 1981. He has written two books: "Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film: Diversity in Unity"(2017) and "Moments in Indonesian Film History: Film and Popular Culture in a Developing Society 1950 - 2020" (2021).

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Research for this book was primarily resourced via a sustained process of mutual cooperation and mutual support, over many years, between members of the Indonesian film world and myself.

For my part, I was involved in numerous cultural relations and educational projects that grew naturally out of researching a field only known to a few non-Indonesians. These projects included the translation of dialogue and the preparation of English subtitles for Indonesian films to be shown abroad; film preservation projects that ensured the survival of a number of Indonesian films that might otherwise have been lost; the screening of Indonesian films at Australian film festivals, at universities and schools, and on Australian television; and eventually the distribution of Indonesian films internationally on DVD via a website at Monash University.

On the Indonesian side, all this gave me unprecedented access to many aspects of the Indonesian film community. Most importantly, I had access over many years to the large film collection at Sinematek Indonesia, the main archive for feature films in Indonesia. My regular visits to Indonesia also facilitated frequent dialogue with staff members of the Faculty of Film and Television at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts—many of them distinguished filmmakers—and access to the milieu, activities and personnel of filmmaking collectives, such as Teguh Karya's Teater Populer and Garin Nugroho's SET Film Workshop; and also to various film festivals in Indonesia, whether this be the Annual FFI (Festival Film Indonesia) or the more recent Jogja-Netpac Asian Film Festival and the Jogjakarta-based Festival Film Dokumenter, as well as to one-off seminars conducted

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First, there are the staff of Sinematek Indonesia, especially its founding director Misbach Yusa Biran (1933–2012) and its deputy director for many years S.M. Ardan (1932–2006)—both of whom had experience in the industry as scriptwriters and/or film or stage directors—and to the subsequent directors of Sinematek Indonesia, Adi Pranajaya, H. Berthy Ibrahim Lindia and the current director, Adi Surya Abdi.

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David Hanan
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EPIGRAPHS

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G. - Gunung	S. - Sungai
GBL. - Gunung Bawah Laut	K. - Kali
Peg. - Pegunungan	D. - Danau
Tg. - Tanjung	W. - Waduk
U. - Ujung	
Kr. - Karang	

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50 - 100 m
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0 - 25 m

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SUMBER DATA

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4. Garis batas satuan wilayah administrasi daerah otonom mengacu pada Peraturan Menteri Dalam Negeri.
5. Kepmendagri Nomor 300.2.2-2138 Tahun 2025 tentang Pemberian dan Pemutakhiran Kode, Data Wilayah Administrasi Pemerintahan, dan Pulau.
6. Peta Alur Laut Kepulauan Indonesia (ALKI) skala 1:300.000 dan 1:100.000, DISHIDROS TNI-AL, 2012.
7. Peta Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Wilayah Kepulauan Indonesia skala 1: 1.000.000, DISHIDROS TNI-AL, 2015.
8. Peta Garis Pangkal Wilayah Negara Kepulauan Indonesia skala 1: 200.000, DISHIDROS TNI-AL, 2015.
9. Gazeter Republik Indonesia (GRI) tahun 2024.
   Catatan: Untuk penamaan pulau-pulau terluar Indonesia disesuaikan dengan Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 38 Tahun 2002 tentang Daftar Koordinat Geografis Titik-Titik Garis Pangkal Kepulauan Indonesia sebagaimana telah diubah dengan Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 37 Tahun 2008 tentang Perubahan atas Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 38 Tahun 2002 tentang Daftar Koordinat Geografis Titik-Titik Garis Pangkal Kepulauan Indonesia.
10. Undang-Undang No. 23 Tahun 2014 tentang Pemerintahan Daerah.
11. Beberapa Undang-Undang terkait Pembentukan Provinsi, Kabupaten/Kota di Indonesia.
12. Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 2017 tentang Penetapan Pulau-pulau Kecil Terluar

NEGARA KESATUAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA

Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI) merupakan Negara Kepulauan (*Archipelagic State*) yang berbatasan dengan 10 (sepuluh) negara. Di darat, Indonesia berbatasan dengan Malaysia, Papua Nugini, dan Timor-Leste. Sedangkan di laut, Indonesia berbatasan dengan India, Tailan, Malaysia, Singapura, Vietnam, Filipina, Palau, Papua Nugini, Australia, dan Timor-Leste.

I. WILAYAH DARAT NKRI

Wilayah darat NKRI terdiri atas daratan pada semua pulau yang berada di sebelah dalam garis pangkal Kepulauan Indonesia. Khusus di P. Kalimantan, P. Sebatik, P. Papua, dan P. Timor berdasarkan perjanjian–perjanjian sebagai berikut:

1. Batas negara dengan Malaysia di P. Kalimantan dan Sebatik mengacu kepada perjanjian batas antara Pemerintah Inggris dan Pemerintah Hindia Belanda (Konvensi 1891, Traktat 1915, dan 1928); MoU antara Pemerintah Indonesia dan Pemerintah Malaysia Nomor 32 dan Nomor 34 Tahun 2019 untuk area II (B-C) B2000 - B 2500 dan area III (C-D) C500 - C600; MoU antara Pemerintah Indonesia dan Pemerintah Malaysia Nomor 33 Tahun 2025 untuk Area II (B-C) B2700 - B3100 dan Nomor 34 Tahun 2025 untuk area West Coast of Pulau Sebatik, New West Pillar - AA2.
2. Batas negara dengan Papua Nugini di P. Papua mengacu kepada Perjanjian antara Indonesia dan Australia mengenai garis-garis Batas Tertentu antara Indonesia dan Papua Nugini tanggal 12 Februari 1973. Yang diratifikasi dengan Undang-undang Nomor 6 Tahun 1973. Diperkuat dengan Deklarasi antara Pemerintah Indonesia dan Pemerintah Papua Nugini tentang Hasil Pengukuran 52 Meridian Monumen (MMs) menggunakan World Geodetic System (WGS) 1984, tahun 2019.
3. Batas negara dengan Timor-Leste di P. Timor mengacu kepada perjanjian antara Pemerintah Hindia Belanda dan Portugis pada Tahun 1904 dan Permanent Court Award (PCA) 1914, Persetujuan Sementara antara Pemerintah Indonesia dan Pemerintah Republik Demokratik Timor-Leste mengenai Perbatasan Darat pada tanggal 8 April 2005, serta Adendum No.1 Persetujuan Sementara antara Indonesia dan Timor-Leste pada tanggal 21 Juni 2013.

II. WILAYAH DAN ZONA PERAIRAN NKRI

Indonesia memiliki kedaulatan di wilayah perairan pedalaman, perairan kepulauan, dan laut teritorial serta memiliki hak berdaulat di zona tambahan, zona ekonomi eksklusif, dan landas kontinen.

Dasar Hukum terkait zona perairan NKRI adalah:

Umum

1. Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1983 tentang Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Indonesia.
2. Undang-Undang Nomor 17 Tahun 1985 tentang Pengesahan United Nations Convension on the Law of the Sea (Konvensi Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa tentang Hukum Laut).
3. Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 1996 tentang Perairan Indonesia.
4. Undang-Undang Nomor 43 Tahun 2008 tentang Wilayah Negara.
5. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 37 Tahun 2002 tentang Hak dan Kewajiban Kapal dan Pesawat Udara Asing dalam Melaksanakan Hak Lintas Alur Laut Kepulauan Melalui Alur Laut Kepulauan Yang Ditetapkan.
6. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 38 Tahun 2002 tentang Daftar Koordinat Geografis Titik-Titik Garis Pangkal Kepulauan Indonesia sebagaimana telah diubah dengan Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 37 Tahun 2008 tentang Perubahan atas Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 38 Tahun 2002 tentang Daftar Koordinat Geografis Titik-Titik Garis Pangkal Kepulauan Indonesia.
7. Keputusan Presiden No.6 Tahun 2017 tentang Penetapan Pulau-Pulau Kecil Terluar.
8. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 12 Tahun 2014 tentang Pencabutan Surat Edaran Presideum Kabinet Ampera No. SE-06/PRES.KAB/6/1967, Tanggal 28 Juni 1967, yang memutuskan bahwa semua kegiatan penyelenggaraan pemerintahan, penggunaan istilah orang dan atau komunitas Tjina/China/Cina diubah menjadi orang dan komunitas Tionghoa, dan untuk penyebutan negara Republik Rakyat China diubah menjadi Republik Rakyat Tiongkok.
9. Undang-Undang Nomor 32 Tahun 2014 tentang Kelautan.

Khusus

A. Batas Laut Wilayah (Teritorial)

1. Undang-Undang Nomor 2 Tahun 1971 tentang Perjanjian Antara Republik Indonesia dan Malaysia tentang Penetapan Garis Batas Laut Wilayah Kedua Negara di Selat Malaka.
2. Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 1973 tentang Perjanjian Antara Indonesia dan Australia Mengenai Garis-garis Batas Tertentu antara Indonesia - Papua New Guinea.
3. Undang-Undang Nomor 7 Tahun 1973 tentang Perjanjian Antara Indonesia dan Singapura tentang Penetapan Garis Batas Laut Wilayah Kedua Negara di Selat Singapura.
4. Undang-Undang Nomor 4 Tahun 2010 tentang Perjanjian Antara Republik Indonesia dan Republik Singapura tentang Penetapan Garis Batas Laut Wilayah Kedua Negara di Bagian Barat Selat Singapura.
5. Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 2017 tentang Perjanjian antara Republik Indonesia dan Republik Singapura tentang Penetapan Garis Batas Laut Wilayah Kedua Negara di bagian Timur Selat Singapura.

B. Batas Wilayah Yurisdiksi

1. Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2007 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Republik Sosialis Vietnam tentang Penetapan Batas Landas Kontinen tanggal 26 Juni 2003.
2. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 89 Tahun 1969 tentang Persetujuan Antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Malaysia tentang Penetapan Garis-garis Landas Kontinen antara Kedua Negara.
3. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 42 Tahun 1971 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Commonwealth Australia tentang Penetapan Batas-batas Dasar Laut Tertentu.
4. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 20 Tahun 1972 tentang Persetujuan Antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, Pemerintah Malaysia, dan Pemerintah Kerajaan Thailand tentang Penetapan Garis-garis Batas Landas Kontinen Bagian Utara Selat Malaka.
5. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 21 Tahun 1972 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Kerajaan Thailand tentang Penetapan Suatu Garis Batas Landas Kontinen antara Kedua Negara di Bagian Utara Selat Malaka dan Laut Andaman.
6. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 66 Tahun 1972 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Commonwealth Australia tentang Penetapan Batas-batas Dasar Laut Tertentu di Laut Timor dan Laut Arafura.
7. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 51 Tahun 1974 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Republik India tentang Penetapan Garis Batas Landas Kontinen antara Kedua Negara.
8. Memorandum Saling Pengertian antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Australia Mengenai Operasi Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia di Area Memancing Ekslusif Australia dan Landas Kontinen Tanggal 7 November 1974.
9. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 1 Tahun 1977 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Kerajaan Thailand tentang Penetapan Suatu Garis Batas Dasar Laut antara Kedua Negara di Laut Andaman.
10. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 26 Tahun 1977 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Republik India tentang Perpanjangan Garis Batas Landas Kontinen Tahun 1974 di Laut Andaman dan Samudera Hindia.
11. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 24 Tahun 1978 tentang Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, Pemerintah Republik India, dan Pemerintah Kerajaan Thailand tentang Penetapan Titik Pertemuan Tiga Garis Batas dan Penetapan Garis Batas Ketiga Negara di Laut Andaman.
12. Keputusan Presiden Nomor 21 Tahun 1982 tentang Persetujuan Hasil Perundingan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dengan Pemerintah Papua Nugini tentang Batas-Batas Maritim antara Republik Indonesia dan Papua Nugini dan Kerjasama tentang Masalah-Masalah yang Bersangkutan;
13. Memorandum Saling Pengertian antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Australia Mengenai Implementasi Ketentuan Pengawasan Perikanan dan Pengaturan Pelaksanaan tanggal 29 Oktober 1981.
14. Perjanjian antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Australia tentang Penetapan Batas Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif dan Batas Laut Tertentu ditandatangani tanggal 14 Maret 1997.
15. Undang-Undang Nomor 4 Tahun 2017 tentang Pengesahan Persetujuan antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Pemerintah Republik Filipina mengenai Penetapan Batas Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif, 2014.
16. Recommendations of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in Regard to the Submission made by Indonesia in respect of the area North West of Sumatra on 16 June 2008 (Rekomendasi Komisi Batas Landas Kontinen tentang submisi yang disampaikan oleh Indonesia untuk area sebelah Barat Laut Sumatera tertanggal 16 Juni 2008). Rekomendasi tersebut disahkan pada tanggal 28 Maret 2011. Atas dasar hal tersebut luas wilayah yurisdiksi landas kontinen Indonesia bertambah seluas 4.209 km2.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the Words of a Filmmaker …

In December 1983, a few weeks after having arrived in Jakarta to commence viewing of films at the film archive, Sinematek Indonesia, I attended an evening screening of a newly completed film, held at the Film Centre Usmar Ismail, where the archive is located. At this preview I was invited by the director of Sinematek Indonesia, H. Misbach Yusa Biran, to meet a number of staff from the film school in Jakarta, the Faculty of Cinematography at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, most of whom were filmmakers or well-known film technicians. Among them was the retired film director, Djadoeg Djayakusuma, who was also a distinguished Faculty member. To initiate a conversation I asked him whether they had any particularly creative and talented students at the Jakarta Arts Institute, and what kinds of work they were doing. Djayakusuma almost took umbrage at this, and, speaking to me in English (he had studied in the USA and in India) told me, quite tersely, as I remember it, that the important thing for students was not to distinguish themselves as '*auteurs*', which was a Western value, but to become aware of the numerous diverse societies and cultures in Indonesia, and to begin to learn what these cultures could offer them, as filmmakers.

In Indonesia Djayakusuma was a famous director who had commenced making films in the early 1950s, and was now a colourful and eminent figure at the film school, passing on his knowledge to the younger generation (Fig. 1.1). The importance of regional cultures to the nation,

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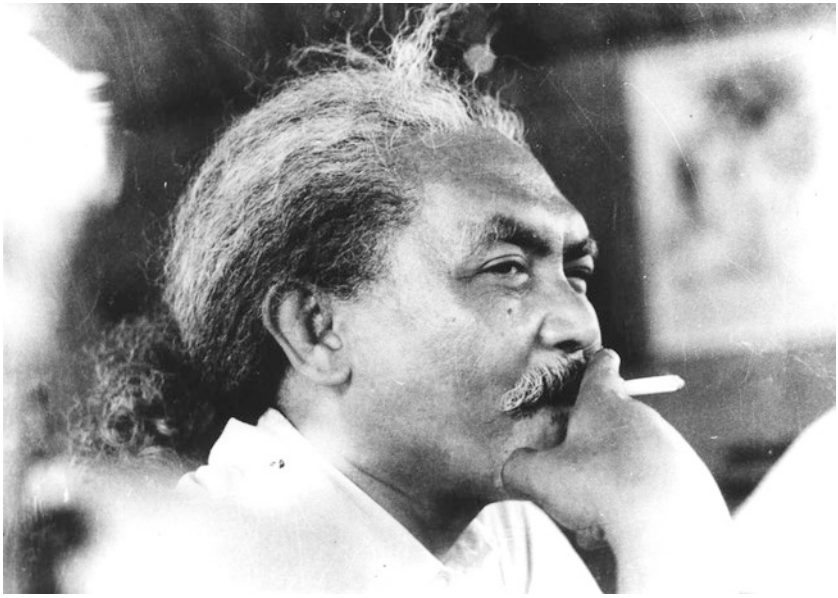

Fig. 1.1 Film director Djadoeg Djayakusuma (1918–87) (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

and to Indonesian identity, was a value to which many Indonesians subscribed, and as I discovered, Djayakusuma had long been acknowledged as an authority on aspects of Indonesian regional cultures, as well being a notable film director. One of the films he had directed in the early 1950s, *Harimau Tjampa* ('The Tiger from Tjampa'), set in the highlands of West Sumatra in the ethnically Minangkabau, matrilineal society, is widely regarded as the most substantial, still extant early feature film made by Indonesian nationals in a regional area, the nation having won its independence from Dutch colonialism only three years earlier, in late December 1949. Moreover, Djayakusuma over the subsequent ten years or so had followed up this early film with some unique and varied experiments in incorporating aspects of regional cultures into feature films. As I was to learn, however, this interest in culture and cultural diversity was not limited to Djayakusuma. The well-known contemporary Indonesian director, Garin Nugroho, who commenced making feature films in 1991, has continued to pioneer the making of films in regional areas, shooting the first

Indonesian feature ever made in West Papua, and earlier shooting a feature on the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia, because he too believes it is important to recognize that Indonesia is a multi-ethnic society with a widely diverse population, and that the cultural systems of regional societies should be respected.[1]

Discourses of the importance of regional cultures, of cultural specificity and of cultural differences, are very common in Indonesia, where the national motto since 1950 has been 'Unity in Diversity', and this emphasis is found in many areas of the media, from the token performances of regional dances on television testifying to the cultural diversity of regions, particularly during the highly centralized Suharto era, to the omnipresent tourist guidebooks. Nevertheless, the statement by Djayakusuma is of a different order and magnitude, contesting the whole notion of the *auteur* and of *auteurist* theory as a criterion of value relevant to the Indonesian film world, and suggesting that '*auterism*' (the singular importance of the individual imagination) is a typically Western concept. Not all the people teaching at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts Faculty of Film and Television would take such a strong view discounting the idea of the *auteur*. Djayakusuma was a director whose originality and capacity for innovation lay precisely in reproducing regional cultures on screen, or in making films that investigated approaches to doing so, and part of his strength was his willingness to study these cultures as part of his work as a filmmaker.[2] Nevertheless, most of the staff at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, both in the 1980s and today, would share Djayakusuma's view that an understanding of the cultures of Indonesia, and their richness and diversity, was an important element in the education of an Indonesian filmmaker.

Of course the question arises: what is meant by culture in this context? Raymond Williams has affirmed that culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. He begins his exposition of the usage of the word with an account of the origins of the word 'culture' in Latin, and its general use in late medieval England, seeing it as a word describing physical processes related to the 'tending of natural growth'. Nevertheless, in his exposition of its various forms of develop-

[1] See Garin Nugroho, 'Foreword' to Aryo Danusiri and Wasmi Alhaziri, eds, *Pendidikan Memang Multikultural: Beberapa Gagasan*, Jakarta, SET dan Ragam, 2002.

[2] For further information about Djayakusuma, see Satyagraha Hoerip, ed., *Dua Dunia Dalam Djadoeg Djajakoesoema*, Jakarta, Dinas Kebudayaan DKI Jakarta bekerjasama dengan Institut Kesenian Jakarta, 1995.

ment in England, France and Germany, Williams does arrive at three basic meanings:

> once we go beyond the physical reference, we have to recognize three broad active categories of usage. The sources of two of these we have already discussed: (i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, from Herder and Klemm. But we have also to recognize (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: **culture** is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film. A **Ministry of Culture** refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history. This use, (iii), is in fact relatively late.[3]

As Williams argued, the 'noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' appeared to be the most widespread use of the word culture, at least in the English language at the time he was writing. But in Indonesia, as I was to learn, the word 'culture' ('*kebudayaan*') most commonly 'indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group', though not humanity in general, where a different word is used ('*kemanusiaan*'). For Djayakusuma, then, the most natural use of the English word culture was in relation to the particular way of life of each of the many cultures of Indonesia, though with the added implication that these cultures contained forms of knowledge, which might be found both in the way they conducted their daily lives and work, and in their traditions, including their rituals and their unique, traditional art forms. Of course in Western societies over the last 30 years this conception of culture has become more frequently invoked, due to the introduction and increasing prevalence of ideas of multiculturalism, particularly as it pertains to migrant communities, where migrant communities are conceived as having cultures, but where dominant communities conceive of themselves as the norm. Nevertheless, while the culture concept is the focus of extensive debate within anthropology and cultural studies,

[3] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, revised edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, 90.

my emphasis here has been to draw attention to the differences between the popular use of the term 'culture' in Western society and in Indonesia.

Writing in 1977, Marxist anthropologist Joel Kahn argued that the importance of the discourse of ethnicity (or regional cultures) in Indonesia should not be underestimated, for it is 'a part of the observable empirical reality of Indonesia and even a strong factor in motivating behaviour'.[4] However, Kahn continues, while the strength of the discourse of ethnicity in Indonesia should not be underestimated, it does not, in fact, correspond to the social structure, being part 'of a disjuncture between class relationships and the way they are perceived'. Following Kahn, to take the culture concept as unproblematic, even as it is used by Djayakusuma in the context of the filmic representation of regional areas, is too simple. There are a number of questions. For one thing, it is possible to critique traditional ways of life and traditional art forms, and at least one Indonesian filmmaker made attempts to do this in his films as early as the late 1950s, the Marxist filmmaker, Bachtiar Siagian, a near contemporary of Djayakusuma. Second, the contemporary ethnographic filmmaker, Aryo Danusiri, who has at times worked with Garin Nugroho, has argued that in Indonesia the very notion of multi-ethnicity has often been used in a tokenistic way, with regional cultures being celebrated by the central government using media stereotypes (particularly during the Suharto New Order period) at the same time as regional areas were being suppressed economically and politically by the same government, using the army to do so.[5] For Danusiri, the real problems for regional societies, many with vital living traditions, lay in the besetting multidimensional conflicts of religion, natural resources, power relations between the central and district governments, alternative histories of each region, and economic issues generally.[6] To this one might add the different rights and roles accorded to women in the different regional societies. Despite these considerations, there are compelling accounts of ways in which important distinguishing features of regional cultures are to be found, not only in the

[4] Joel Kahn, 'Ideology and Social Structure in Indonesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1), 1978, 109.

[5] Aryo Danusiri, 'Filming Indonesia: Between Mythical and Critical Multiculturalism', paper written for the Second Festival of Visual Culture, NAFA, Joensuu, Finland, October 2002, subsequently published as a pdf file in the DVD *Three Documentaries about Aceh by Aryo Danusiri*, Melbourne, Monash Asia Institute, 2005.

[6] Ibid., 6.

art forms of regional communities but in forms of community organization, as discussed, for example, by Carol Warren in her book on community organization in Bali.[7]

Furthermore, there is the question of the origins and evolution of the culture concept in Indonesia itself, how this notion of culture as attaching to a community had arrived in Indonesia, whether it was an indigenous concept or a derived concept, and what strength it has had as a discourse within the society. The commonly used word for tradition in Indonesia is *adat*, an Indonesian-Malay word derived from the Arabic 'habit', though the notion of a local set of customs and traditions preceded the coming of Islam to Indonesia. For example, from the early sixteenth century onwards, the Minangkabau in West Sumatra markedly retained their traditional matrilineal social arrangements (where the family home and subsistence rice farming land were the property of women) that preceded Islam, but began to incorporate Islam within the original framework.[8] The valorization of regional cultures in Indonesia received tremendous stimulus from Dutch anthropologists in the period of the reforming ethical policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when progressives in Dutch society came to emphasize the need to engage with and understand Indonesian regional cultures, their customs and their laws. The primary example of this is the work of the Leiden University based Dutch legal scholar, Cornelis van Vollenhoven, who in the early twentieth century developed a project to codify the traditional legal systems (*adat* law) of numerous regional societies of Indonesia.[9] At the same time the concept of culture, although used, was not one prioritized by the Indonesian nationalists, in the first half of the twentieth century, for two reasons. First, what the nationalists were seeking was an independent nation, so that to emphasize ethnic and cultural differences in the period of the struggle for independence would be to introduce a

[7] Carol Warren, *Adat and Dinas: Balinese Communities in the Indonesian State*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1993.

[8] Taufik Abdullah, 'Adat and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau', *Indonesia* 2, October 1966, 1–24; Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784–1847*, London and Malmö, Curzon Press, 1983, 117–25. Dobbin reports that spirit worship and the central role of the shaman in the society continued after the conversion to Islam.

[9] See the discussion of van Vollenhoven's views, and their implications for subsequent anthropology, in Joel S. Kahn, *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture*, London, Sage Publications, 1995, 84–7 and passim.

discourse of difference rather than unity, particularly at the height of the struggle for independence after the Second World War, when the Dutch had managed to reoccupy the outer islands of the archipelago.[10] Second, it was felt that the Dutch had indeed taken over the culture concept, for, following van Vollenhoven and the ethicists, cultural differences of different regional peoples was a major discourse in the late colonial period, used by Dutch conservatives as well as by progressives, not only for the original purpose of developing laws more suitable for particular peoples, but often to signify that which was traditional and therefore 'not modern'. Once the new nation had been formed as a united political body in late 1949, as could be expected, people in regional areas, especially those in outer islands occupied by the Dutch in the period 1946–49, began to demand recognition of their regional interests and regional differences. Attempts were made to address this, one measure being the adoption, early in the next year, of the national motto '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' (literally 'They are not one, but are of the same kind') commonly translated as 'Unity in Diversity', which signified an acceptance of diversity as well as being an affirmation of unity.[11]

Within these debates around cultures, traditional and modern, we can see that there are two levels. On the one hand there is an interest in the cultural differences and the cultural specificity of regions. On the other hand there is the question of what constitutes Indonesian culture as a whole. In the mid 1930s the founder of the literary journal *Poedjangga Baroe*, Sutan Takdir Alisyabana, initiated a debate, arguing that 'a modern Indonesian culture' needed to incorporate progressive elements of Western culture. He was opposed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the founder of the Taman

[10] Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds, *Indonesian Political Thinking: 1945–1965*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1970, 316–18.

[11] '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' is a phrase from a fourteenth-century Javanese epic poem, *Kakawin Sutasoma* by Empu Tantular, promoting tolerance between Hindus and Buddhists. The circumstances under which this motto was adopted are instructive. The coordinating minister of the committee that, in 1950, under the supervision of Sukarno adopted the national motto and designed the national symbol, was Sultan Hamid II of Pontianak, West Kalimantan, who had been identified with Dutch attempts to create a loose federation of Indonesian states, rather than the unitary Republic proposed by Sukarno, and who was himself involved in a rebellion in January 1950. So the idea of unity in diversity should be seen as a creative political discourse, subject to tension and to strain. For an account of the politics at the time, see George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1952, 448–55.

Siswa nationalist schools, and others, who argued that Western culture was 'materialist, intellectual and individualist', and hence was inimical to indigenous Indonesian cultures.[12] In 1959, however, at the time of the introduction of Guided Democracy, *kepribadian nasional* (national personality or national characteristics) was listed as one of the fundamental principles in the manifesto of the new political system.

Studies of Cultural Specificity in Film in Japan, India and 'the Third World'

A number of writings on the cinema, emerging since the late 1970s, and also developments in film practice, some emerging even earlier, have influenced this book. Among them are Noel Burch's book, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema*, on culturally specific uses of film form in films by Japanese directors, especially Ozu, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa; Teshome Gabriel's advocacy of cultural resistance in the cinema and the importance of cinema representing a society in culturally specific terms, in his *Third Cinema in the Third World*; and, even earlier, the manifestos of the Argentinian filmmakers, Solanas and Getino, and their predecessors, arguing for a Third Cinema, manifestos so influential for Gabriel.[13] In Australia in the late 1970s there emerged the possibility of Aborigines making films about their communities, as seen in Essie Coffey's *My Survival as an Aboriginal*, but also in ground-breaking transitional collaborative works, *Two Laws* and *Wrong Side of the Road*, in which authorship was no longer simply that of white filmmakers. Over the next few years, this led to the emergence of significant Aboriginal filmmakers

[12] Ki Hadjar Dewantara, 'Some Aspects of National Education and the Taman Siswa Institute of Jogjakarta', *Indonesia* 4, October 1967, 150–68. The context of Dewantara's work is provided in Ruth T. McVey, 'Taman Siswa and the Indonesian National Awakening', *Indonesia* 4, October 1967, 128–49.

[13] Noel Burch, *To the Distant Observer*, London, Scolar Press, 1979; Teshome H. Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Research Press, 1982. To an extent Gabriel's early work is an academic formalization of positions announced in Solanas and Getino's manifesto 'Towards a Third Cinema' and in the writings of Frantz Fanon, in particular his three phases of the native writer-intellectual in his development towards national consciousness. See Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema' in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods*, vol. I, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1976, 44–66, and Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, 207–48.

in Australia, themselves engaging with their own cultures in film.[14] Later in the 1980s there appeared writings on the formal uniqueness of Indian cinema, particularly in the Bombay cinema and in its relation to its audiences, most notably in essays by Ashish Rajadhyaksha, and then by Ravi Vasudevan.[15] One might even argue that Christian Metz's second major book, *Language and Cinema*, with its stress on identifying codes specific to cinema in contrast to codes non-specific to cinema, and its distinction between cinematic codes and cultural codes, shifted the discussion of film away from an emphasis on the singular vision of the *auteur* or even simply on genre, as the source of the material of a film, and opened up the possibility of seeing—in a more systematic way—a film as at times a dialogue between a cinematic author, and the codes and frames of references of a society.[16] More recently, in academic writing there has been a shift away from an interest in cultural specificity to the dynamics, impact and possibilities in globalization.[17]

Noel Burch's *To the Distant Observer* is primarily a study of film form, concerned particularly with how certain radically 'anti-illusionist' tendencies in traditional Japanese aesthetics are found in the work of some major Japanese film directors, most particularly in the early films of Ozu and Mizoguchi in the 1930s, and in subtle ways in works by Kurosawa in the 1950s—through Kurosawa's interplay of abstract patterns and narrative denotation—all creating alternatives to dominant modes of representation in the West, particularly to what Burch terms the institutional mode of representation, which he regarded as illusionist in its formal stratagems. Burch sees this difference in representational modes as stemming from the adoption by these filmmakers of aspects of the aesthetics of the Heian court (794–1186) and of the Edo period (1603–88), whether the influences are *tanka* poetry (short poems allowing for polysemy rather than linearity), Noh drama, *ukiyo-e* woodblocks, or Bunraku puppetry and

[14]For a recent discussion of *Two Laws*, see Therese Davis and Cassi Plate, 'Surrendering Control: *Two Laws* as Collaborative Community Film-making: An Interview with Carolyn Strachan and Alessandro Cavadini', *Studies in Documentary Film* 2 (2), 2008, 149–68.

[15]Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'Neo-traditionalism: Film as Popular Art in India', *Framework* 32–3, 1986, 20–67; Ravi Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema,* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 204.

[16]Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema*, The Hague, Mouton, 1974, 34–5 and passim.

[17]For an early example, see Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds, *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996.

Kabuki theatre. Similarly, in writings about early Indian cinema, Ashish Rajadhyaksha specifies ways in which long-standing traditions of representation and performance in India were newly reproduced in early twentieth-century Indian cinema. For example, in his 1918 film, *Shri Krishna Janma*, early Bombay filmmaker, D.G. Phalke, not only retells mythological stories, but combines secular spaces with sacred spaces, including scenes in which members of the public from various castes pray to the figure of Krishna, and where the film's audience are placed in a position emulating that of the praying protagonists.[18] In *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, Ravi Vasudevan sees much modern Bombay cinema creating a 'narrative community', a different order of cultural and political subjectivity.[19] Fundamental to this are direct address, frontality, tableau mode of representation, iconicity and iconic figures, and *darshan* ('the power exercised by the authoritative image within Hindu culture'), together with traditional music resonant of particular communities.

Here it should be noted that both Burch and the Indian authors are primarily concerned with systemic formal differences, which in their particular combinations may be said to produce or encourage different kinds of viewer–film relation. In my study of Indonesian cinema, however, it has not appeared to me that Indonesian cinema as a whole, nor the work of particular directors, is distinguished by a formal uniqueness, amounting to a unique and culturally specific mode of representation. So the question arises, in what ways, other than in film form and mode of representation, can cultural differences be found in a film? In the main this book addresses how, in the study of the cinema, one can engage with cultural codes that are not purely film specific codes.

Teshome Gabriel's pioneering *Third Cinema in the Third World* (1982) is not so much a study of Third World Cinema but the formulation of what constitutes a radical Third World Cinema, which recognizes the particular conditions of the people of emerging nations, and is to be known as Third Cinema. At the core of Gabriel's writings is a conception of how Third Cinema is derived from the people and their culture. For Gabriel, Third Cinema is to be based on traditional values and textual and perfor-

[18]Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology', *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 14–15, 1987, 47–78.

[19]Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, passim, but especially 69, 119–23 and 277.

mance forms of societies and cultures which, for much of their populations, still contain, in meaningful ways, many features of an oral culture, even while participating in some sectors in literate modernity.[20] Gabriel's position then is not very different from that of the Indonesian director, Djayakusuma, particularly his rejection of *auteurism*, though Gabriel adds the proviso that in a radical Third World Cinema the folk culture itself needs also to be subject to critical inspection. In his comparative analysis of 'oral' or 'folk art', Gabriel avows that 'while … the community issue is at the heart of Third World traditional culture, the issue of the individual is at the base of Western or print culture'.[21] He also correlates these distinctions with examples of ways in which some aspects of film form are more appropriate to express a traditional society. So, for Gabriel, the close-up may be less relevant to Third Cinema, with its need to represent groups and group cohesiveness, while the long take and the wide-angle shot can encompass different kinds of intra-group relatedness, and also signify the relationship to nature.

Gabriel—along with others advocating a Third Cinema, such as Solanas and Getino—in his early writings sets up systematic sets of binary oppositions between a culturally specific radical Third Cinema and a monolithic Hollywood. He also distinguishes between different kinds of films made in the Third World: those assimilating themselves to Hollywood styles of entertainment; those where there is some indigenization of production and style, but with a tendency to romanticize the traditional culture; and 'the combative phase', or 'Third Cinema', where film becomes an ideological tool and is owned by the nation and the people. Numerous debates have proliferated around aspects of Gabriel's earlier work.[22] But in his later work Gabriel's emphasis changes. He no longer contrasts films, and sets of films, in terms of systematic binary oppositions, nor stipulates categories for different kinds of Third World films, but now emphasizes the diversity of cultures found in societies and the diversity of people's needs, and their different senses of space, time and value. For example, in his later work Gabriel sees African cinema in terms of metaphors of journey, and of the nomadic. For me, in writing this book, what is important about Gabriel's

[20] Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World*, 95.

[21] Ibid., 40.

[22] See the essays in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds, *Questions of Third Cinema*, London, BFI Publishing, 1989, and in Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake, eds, *Rethinking Third Cinema*, New York and London, Routledge, 2003.

work is not his binary oppositions nor even his categories, but his initial proposition about the importance of cultural specificity and how one defines it in a particular context. Despite the enthusiasm today for globalization and the global in the local, there are still many questions about the local, how one defines it, and in what ways the local can be culturally resistant to a pervasive and dominant global.

The Term 'Culture' in the Framework of this Study

In this book I address primarily issues of cultural specificity and cultural and political resistance in Indonesian cinema—and related innovation—over a 60-year period. Within this framework, I will be addressing two separate issues with regard to the notion of cultural specificity. First, there is the notion presented by Djayakusuma, of the task of filmmakers to engage with specific wisdoms of regional societies and their cultural specificity. This will be addressed most directly in an early chapter examining regionalism in the Indonesian cinema, but numerous films made in and about regional areas are discussed elsewhere in this study.

But second, there is the issue of the cultural difference of Indonesia and the Indonesian archipelago as a whole, in contrast to the West, or in contrast, even, to other societies, particularly those societies outside of South East Asia. Here the differences are not so much the various different regional specificities perceived by an Indonesian within Indonesia, in terms of languages and *adat*, but broader kinds of specificity, cultural dominants found generally within the region of the Indonesian archipelago, which may be perceived by an outsider as broad cultural differences, in contrast to what they have come to expect in their own non-Indonesian society, in the same way that Indonesians frequently draw attention to what they regard as typically Western-coded behaviour. Without trying to theorize a single 'national culture', aspects of this topic of broad cultural dominants will be addressed most particularly in two chapters on body language in Indonesia, and its representation in the work of some key Indonesian filmmakers, and also in a subsequent, speculative chapter on women in the context of cultural difference. In the case of both kinds of specificity, one may ask, how are these kinds of specificity characteristically addressed by Indonesian filmmakers, and by which filmmakers? What are the forms by which, and the conditions under which, such issues are explored in Indonesia, and how conscious and sustained is this exploration? Have the approaches changed over

time? Some of the issues addressed in the chapters on broad cultural dominants, such as body language, are issues not commonly addressed in Indonesian discourse about regional cultural differences, because they are taken for granted and hence have a life below the horizon of citizenry, and even below the horizons of many anthropologists. However, they are certainly relevant to those concerned with visual anthropology and to more complete descriptions of cultural phenomena. Do these broad cultural dominants underlie and explain aspects of the regional cultures of Indonesia? And how do both of these, in turn, have an influence upon the way modern politics has been conducted in the new nation? Some of the leaders of the Indonesian revolution, such as Mohammad Hatta, and President Sukarno himself, had views on dominant characteristics of the Indonesian people as a whole, such as *gotong royong* (mutual support). The various usages of this term are explored in Chap. 2 of this book, for some principles of the national philosophy, *Pancasila*, were linked by Sukarno to *gotong royong*, which he argued would be an underlying characteristics of the future Indonesian state. However, the way the term '*gotong royong*', and related terms, have been used, indeed exploited, by different regimes, and deployed by filmmakers, has varied considerably.

At this point I wish to raise issues in a more specific way by elucidating some of the cultural features of an Indonesian film made in the early 1980s, *Roro Mendut*.

The Example of the Film *Roro Mendut*

The main concepts I am putting forward that broadly create the framework for the investigation to be conducted in this book are cultural difference, cultural specificity, and cultural and political resistance, with cultural specificity conceived in this project as both discourses of regional specificity and broad cultural dominants. How these can apply to a film can be illustrated quite quickly with reference to an Indonesian film, *Roro Mendut*. All of these concepts apply to this one film in relatively clear ways.

Roro Mendut, made in 1982 at the height of the power of Suharto, and set in seventeenth-century Java, is itself an allegory of resistance—sexual, cultural and political. The film tells the story of a young woman from the north coast of Java, Roro Mendut, who is taken into captivity as a spoil of war and given to a victorious general of the Central Javanese Mataram court, Tumenggung Wiroguno, and expected to become his concubine. At the moment of her first encounter with Wiroguno, when she is thrown

at his feet by his soldiers, one sees that Roro Mendut recognizes him as a threat to her integrity and selfhood. The film throughout the length of its narrative explores her resistance to his demands. While what she resists is sexual subjugation and its social consequences, numerous ideas of resistance are present in the film simultaneously at a number of levels. Primarily, there is the resistance of the young woman herself and the forms this resistance takes over a number of stages of the story. She negotiates a deal with Wiroguno whereby, in exchange for her freedom from immediate sexual subjugation, she will pay a tax to him regularly. The general appears fascinated by the fact that she will negotiate such a deal, believing as well that she will not be able to pay the tax. She pays it by going secretly and in disguise to a local village and there, with the aid of a female companion, she sets up a tent in which she sells cigarettes—moistened with her own saliva—to peasant men of all ages. These peasant men and boys are enticed by an image of her moistening the cigarettes by licking them, an image created in silhouette in a deeply shaded window of her tent. As an aside, one may comment here that this image of her framed in silhouette for the attention of a gazing populace in itself might be seen as a comment on cinema. Mendut thus quite consciously, defiantly and humorously—as the basis of her resistance to General Wiroguno—makes use of the power of sexual attraction and male desire, conceived as an economic opportunity. At the same time she places herself at some distance from her clients. But even as she does so she shifts the idea of desire away from the gaze of the general, who wants to control her, to other parameters of desire: the sensuality and intimacy inherent in bodily fluids, and the all-pervading sensuality of the thick aroma of the Indonesian *kretek* cigarette, imbued with the subtle and insinuating scent of cloves. This unique set of images, arising specifically from the sale of cigarettes in the village, is a central motif of the film, and striking and surprising when it occurs, both in the outrageous nature of Roro Mendut's stratagems, and the insight that she displays.

But other kinds of imaging of the body and of eroticism have occurred beforehand in the film, and these have their own contrasting specificities and are different in turn from what one finds in court scenes in films set, for example, in European courts. In early scenes at the Mataram court there is a dance performance, initially of a Central Javanese court dance, known as *bedhaya*, in which groups of women move slowly in unison, as though in suspended time, chanting. Mendut, when asked to dance, produces something very different—a peasant dance from her region, a

flirtatious northern coastal dance, which is both a form of display and exhibitionism, and, in its village origins, an interactive dance, in which men can join, as in a *ronggeng* (Fig. 1.2). Groups of men, the lower orders in the court, initially glimpsed as a massed group of similar, barely distinguishable faces, respond to its interactive nature and seek to join in the dance, this producing looks of disgust and stern disapprobation from the aristocratic women positioned as guardians of Mataram court etiquette. The contrast between the highly specialized and elite Javanese court dance, the *bedhaya*—answering the demands of formality, decorum and discipline, imposed on both the dancers and the viewers as a form of control and uniformity—and the rowdy, interactive peasant dance which signifies pleasure, initiative and personal skill, overtly signifies differences of culture and of class, and is performed as an act of both defiance and enticement by Mendut, in the presence of the glowing eyes of the lascivious general. At the same time, the specific regional and class differences, embodied in this scene contrasting two kinds of dance, are contained within something that, in the context of Java and perhaps Indonesia as a whole, they all share, as a broad cultural dominant: the group body language of all the people, whether it be the aristocratic women of the court, embodying ideas of restraint but arranged in group formation and as spectators dressed in similar formal attire (Fig. 1.3), or the male courtiers, with bared shoulders, and within the darkened cinemascope frame that views

Fig. 1.2 The *pasisir* (northern coastal regions) dance that Roro Mendut initiates in the seventeenth-century Central Javanese Mataram court, where she is a captive. An early scene in the 1982 film *Roro Mendut* (Director: Ami Priyono) (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 1.3 A group of aristocratic women in the Mataram court, all dressed in similar fashion, watch, with distaste, the northern coastal dance early in *Roro Mendut* (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 1.4 Groups of male courtiers enjoy the dance from the northern coast. The group nature of the society, regardless of class or local culture, is emphasized in the representation of each class in the visual design of *Roro Mendut* (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

them on the floor of the assembly, deliberately presented to the viewer as a not dissimilar, if contrasting, group mass (Fig. 1.4). Peasant women in the court are presented also as a closely bonded group mass (Fig. 1.5). A sense of group body language extends even to the female concubines, controlled by the general's first wife, and frequently glimpsed as a group either in the closeness of their confinement, or in the bathing pools of the

Fig. 1.5 Groups of peasant women watch the *pasisir* dance in progress in the Mataram court, in *Roro Mendut* (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

palace. In each case the group nature of the society, regardless of class or local culture, is emphasized in the representation of each class in the visual design of the film. Only the general, in his capacity and position as leader, isolated on his throne, is excluded from this kind of visual organization according to contrasting, dense social groups.

Roro Mendut might be seen as a film which, through its story, in the context of Indonesia in 1982, is an allegory about regional resistance to the president in power at the time the film was made, Central Javanese-born General Suharto, and the tendency of his regime to Javanization (*kejawanisasi*) of the whole of Indonesia. The film was based on a very recently published novel, and the novelist was an advisor to the scriptwriters of the film. But the novel is in turn the elaboration of a story for generations found performed in Central Javanese *ketoprak* popular theatre, where court life and the political processes of the powerful and influential are subject to satire.[23] Moreover, this story in turn, even earlier, had its basis in Central Javanese folklore and legend. Given the socially progressive attitudes of the author of the novel, the Jesuit priest and respected

[23] For a discussion of the Mendut story as a frequently performed text of Javanese *ketoprak* drama, and for a comparison between the film and *ketoprak* versions of the story, see Barbara Hatley, 'Texts and Contexts: The Roro Mendut Folk Legend on Stage and Screen,' in Krishna Sen, ed., *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988, 14–24. The novel retelling the story is Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Roro Mendut: Novel Sejarah*, Jakarta, PT Gramedia, 1983.

social worker, Mangunwijaya, and given the nature of the story itself, which begins with one region, the north coast of Java, being militarily dominated by another, Central Java, both the novel and the film can be seen as allegories with specific messages for contemporary politics of the time. But we need also to remember the origins of the story in popular culture and local legend. The popularity of the story and its reappearance in different forms suggests something more continuous in the discourses of resistance to domination within Javanese society, whether it be resistance in matters of gender (resistance to sexual subjugation), culture (an awareness of cultural and regional differences) or politics (the power of a mighty general who rules through force rather than through wisdom).

Additionally, as will be further confirmed in a later chapter, the director of the film, Ami Priyono—who admired the varied body of work produced by Djayakusuma and its implications for Indonesia at the time, and who himself had been trained in designing for film at the State Film School in Moscow in the early 1960s—consciously used aspects of the visual design of the film to give expression to the specificity of Javanese body language, which he saw with the eye of one engaged in visual anthropology and not simply in terms of conventional dramaturgy and conventional cinematic codes of *mise en scène*, blocking and framing.[24] In this well-regarded but, by and large, not overly celebrated Indonesian film, we find significant examples of political resistance, and examples of deliberately articulated ideas of observable cultural differences and of cultural specificity, all at once embodied in a film.

In my relatively brief discussion of *Roro Mendut* I have given examples of ways in which issues of cultural specificity and political resistance can be discussed in relation to an Indonesian film. The film *Roro Mendut* is culturally specific, not only in the two traditional dance forms it presents, but in the way it gives definition to body language generally, body language being an important consideration to which two whole chapters of this book will be devoted. The film is also about female resistance and, implicitly, via allegory, it is also about cultural and political resistance. As well, the tale it tells is one drawn from a store of Javanese legends that were in use in popular theatre over generations. If we want to talk about

[24] In the early 1960s Ami Priyono, on an exchange scholarship with the USSR, was trained in film design at Moscow's All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (Vsesoyuzni Gosudarstvenni Institut Kinematografi, VGIK).

the contemporary political meanings of this film, we need also to consider that they are veiled by being displaced from the immediate context of Indonesian society in 1982, and relocated in a distant, indeed exotically conceived era within history, the Mataram empire, the very stuff of popular entertainment, indeed of popular cinema, but here given refined and sophisticated treatment by an intelligent director and a production company, the publishing house Gramedia, which also published the novel, seeking to make a quality film. In Indonesia *Roro Mendut* received the top award for the Best Film Design at the 1983 Indonesian Film Festival and was nominated for numerous other awards. At the time of the film's release there was some controversy, the novelist Mangunwijaya, who was an advisor for the film, arguing that although in the legend (and in the film) Mendut committed suicide, in the novel he had deliberately left this unresolved, in the interests of promoting optimism and the idea of continuing opposition and resistance.

Such, in brief, were the various reactions to the film in its country of origin. But I wish to make one further point about *Roro Mendut*, namely its overseas reception and reputation. Some commentators outside of Indonesia have seen the story, and the film, as similar to that retold in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, indeed one even claiming that the film is an adaptation by the film's director, Ami Priyono, of the Romeo and Juliet story.[25] This view seems to be based on the fact that in the latter parts of the story Mendut attempts to escape her fate through a romantic elopement with a young man, whom she has come to love, but ultimately they are doomed, their final demise as star-crossed lovers taking various forms in different versions of the story. But even the short analysis I have given of aspects of the film indicates numerous core plot elements, cultural features and political dimensions that are not in the play *Romeo and Juliet*. Indeed similarities with the Romeo and Juliet story only commence about halfway through the film with the entry of Mendut's future lover, Pronocitro, the first half of the story outlining an entirely different situation from that in *Romeo and Juliet*, so that the elopement is a kind of denouement. Moreover, *Romeo and Juliet* is an English play, which is itself

[25] This comment is made about the film in *The Oxford History of World Cinema* in a caption—apparently written by editorial staff—for a still of the film. See Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed., *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, 692. The film's credits list TIM Produksi (the production team as a whole) as scriptwriters of the film, not simply the director of the film, Ami Priyono.

based on an Italian tale, and is set away from England, in Verona, while *Roro Mendut* is set in Central Java in ways where political allegories in the film are directly relevant to contemporary Indonesian society. The rapid assimilation of this film—and its very different story, historical references, cultural specificities and contemporary political allegories—to the literature of another country, Great Britain, might be seen as an imperialistic, if not orientalist, move, the result of largely unconscious ethnocentric habits of mind which do not sufficiently allow for autonomous developments in the literary and artistic traditions of less well-known countries.

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CHAPTER 2

Indonesia: An Emerging Nation

In the twenty-first century Indonesia is a significant emerging nation on the global stage. With a population of more than 250 million people, it is the fourth largest country in the world. It is also the world's largest Muslim nation. In terms of economic growth, one economic forecaster has predicted that by 2050 Indonesia could even be the fourth most productive nation in the world (and certainly would be in the top ten), given an average growth rate of 5.7 % in the ten years to 2015.[1] Despite being the world's largest Muslim nation, it is not beset by the complex antagonisms that characterize many Muslim societies in the Middle East, even though it has a problem with terrorist cells and terrorist movements. While at the time of writing in early 2016 it is less than two decades since the end of the three-decades long, repressive army-backed Suharto New Order regime, elections are now held regularly, Indonesia's population is increasingly literate, and the role of the army in civilian life has been

[1]See PricewaterhouseCoopers, 'Nigeria, Indonesia and Mexico set to push UK and France out of top 10 by 2050', March 2015, http://www.pwc.com/ng/en/press-room/the-world-by-2050.html. Average growth rates are from the World Bank, 'GDP growth (Annual %)', http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG), accessed 4 April 2016. Information about recent growth rates in Indonesia is from the International Monetary Fund, 'Indonesia: Selected Issues' (IMF Country Report No. 11/310), October 2011, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2011/cr11310.pdf.

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D. Hanan, *Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film*,
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reduced.[2] With some reservations, one may say that its press and media are increasingly free.[3] Nevertheless, despite the optimistic projections, the Indonesian average income (gross national income per capita) in 2012 on UNICEF estimates was still only US$3240 per year, whereas the average income in the USA was $50,120 for the same year. Moreover, even in 2012, according to UNICEF, 16.2 % of Indonesians were below the poverty line of US$1.25 per day over the previous five years.[4] Of course such figures depend on the way the poverty line is set. In 2015, it has been estimated, 11 % of Indonesians were living below the poverty line of US$1.25 a day, but that 40 % would be regarded as living below the poverty line, if it was set at $2 a day.[5] Overall these figures point to the continuing disparities, in income and material standards of living, between countries long regarded as part of the First World and those countries regarded in the mid twentieth century as part of the Third World, many of them former colonies like Indonesia, which was formerly colonized by the Dutch.

One major success in Indonesia has been the acceptance of a national language, '*Bahasa Indonesia*', a form of Malay, adopted by a youth congress in 1928, as a means by which people speaking more than 700 languages across the Indonesian archipelago might communicate within a future nation. Many Indonesians are to a degree bilingual, speaking their regional language, and the national language, which is taught in schools and used by the national media. Films almost always use the national language. However, the use of dialects, such as Jakarta dialect, in films, is

[2] For an account of developments and issues in education in Indonesia, see OECD/Asian Development Bank, *Education in Indonesia: Rising to the Challenge*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2015, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264230750-en. A summary of efforts by successive governments in the 2000s to limit the role of the army in the society is provided in Audrey Kahin, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, third edition, New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 43–5.

[3] A discussion of the complexities in assessing media freedom is provided in Krishna Sen, 'Introduction—Re-forming Media in Indonesia's Transition to Democracy', in Krishna Sen and David T. Hill, *Politics and the Media in Twenty-first Century Indonesia—Decade of Democracy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, 1–12.

[4] UNICEF, 'At a Glance: Indonesia—Statistics', http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/indonesia_statistics.html, accessed 4 April 2016.

[5] Statement by Dr Matthew Wai-Poi of the World Bank, Jakarta, in a seminar entitled 'Who Is Benefiting from Jokowi's Economic Policies?' held at the University of Melbourne on 21 April 2016, sponsored by the Asia Institute and the Indonesia Forum.

popular, and filmmakers do on some occasions use recognizable admixtures of local words and phrases to allude to a local language and local ethos.

While this book explores in detail films made between 1950 and the early 2000s, it surveys film production in Indonesia from 1926—when the first feature film was produced—to the second decade of the twenty-first century. In these nine decades Indonesia goes through a number of major transitions, the first being the transition from colonial subjugation and war, to a new, emerging nation in the 1950s. As one would expect, in each era the films are inflected by the conditions of the time and by changing political circumstances. This chapter begins by outlining the state of the nation as it emerged from colonialism, the links the new nation had with other nations emerging from colonialism, and the vision of the new nation as encapsulated in the writings and speeches of its early leaders—together with the social and cultural implications of this vision for the people. Subsequently it outlines the main features of each political era since the achievement of independence: the early Sukarno, parliamentary democracy period (1950–59); the Guided Democracy period (1959–65); the Suharto New Order regime (1966–98); and the *Reformasi* period since the fall of Suharto. The chapter concludes with a discussion of writings on how the identity and culture of the new nation might be read in films, and on the impact of particular regimes, particularly the 32-year Suharto New Order regime, on what kinds of films could be made and released to the public.

The Colonial Period

Dutch penetration of the Indonesian archipelago began initially through the presence of the Dutch East India Company, a trading company, which, after numerous incursions into the South East Asian region, in 1619 at a village on the present site now known as Jakarta, set up the fortress town of Batavia. The Dutch East India Company maintained a military and trading presence throughout much of Java and elsewhere in the archipelago for nearly 200 years, until its bankruptcy and demise in the late eighteenth century. The presence of the Dutch East India Company resulted not only in trade, but in a political presence through the formation of alliances with local leaders, and its presence also produced structural changes in the economy. For example, the Chinese population in Java, that had hitherto primarily organized trade between China and the Javanese, now

became middlemen in trade between the Dutch East India Company and the Javanese population.[6]

Formal colonization by Holland began with the establishment of the Netherlands East Indies in 1816, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The intensive colonization that followed saw the establishment of regimes for the taxing of the Javanese, leading to the Java War (1825–30), the single most sustained attempt to resist Dutch incursions. In the 1830s the tax system was replaced by the Cultivation System, involving the forced introduction of new, more profitable crops (sugar and coffee), with Javanese peasants obliged to spend a proportion of their time working the Dutch estates, or providing a proportion of their own crops. By the 1850s financial returns from the Cultivation System constituted 30 % of the national budget in Holland. As a result of a treaty, the Dutch had controlled trade in Sulawesi since 1669. They had strengthened their position in the Moluccas throughout the seventeenth century. Trade in large parts of Borneo (now Kalimantan), was under their control by formal agreement with the British since 1824. By 1837 the Dutch had subdued West Sumatra (by taking sides in the Padri War), and their expeditionary forces began campaigns to subdue Aceh in 1873. Carey argues that even with the ending of the Cultivation System in 1870, and the introduction of economic liberalism, the social and economic position of the Javanese continued to decline with the expansion of the Dutch estates.[7] South Bali was finally brought under Dutch control in 1906. The early 1940s saw the temporary removal of the Dutch regime with the Japanese occupation of the Indonesian islands (February 1942–August 1945). The Japanese occupation only increased poverty and distress as the Japanese forces commandeered produce to be sent to the war front elsewhere, and rounded up males to be sent as slave labourers, known as *romusha*, to war zones. The Japanese occupation was followed by a period of struggle for independence against returning Dutch forces, a struggle that lasted more than four years from the date of the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 by Sukarno and Hatta, and included military campaigns by the Dutch. Dutch colonization only ended with the final Dutch withdrawal in December 1949, on the basis of an internationally brokered agreement.

[6]For a detailed account of changes in the economy produced by the presence of the Dutch, see George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1952, Chapter 1.

[7]P.B.R. Carey, 'Aspects of Javanese History in the Nineteenth Century', in Harry Aveling, ed., *The Development of Indonesian Society*, Brisbane, Queensland University Press, 1979, 95–6.

The achievement of independence from the Dutch was a time of great celebration, but what emerged was an impoverished nation. It is difficult to get exact figures for overall colonial expropriation,[8] but it would appear that one impact of Dutch colonization was that for at least 130 years little surplus capital was available to most indigenous Indonesians to develop for themselves their country and its industries—and their educational systems—even though some basic infrastructure, such as railways and roads, was constructed in Java by the Dutch administration. Even after the achievement of independence, much of industry still remained in Dutch hands. Indonesian seizure of Dutch and other foreign-owned plantations and oilfields in December 1957 prompted dismay internationally, resulting in covert support—by the USA, Britain, Australia and the Philippines—for regional rebellions in West Sumatra and South Sulawesi.[9]

At the time of the eventual achievement of independence in late 1949, the literacy rate in the new nation was only 10 %, whereas literacy rates had been 90 % or more in Northern and Western Europe since 1913.[10] In Indonesia in the mid 1950s there was only about one doctor per 60,000 people, whereas even in India there was one doctor per 6000.[11] In 1960 the average life expectancy of an Indonesian was only 49 years, whereas in the USA and Australia it was 73 years.[12] Today, overall literacy, less

[8] See the discussion of the impact of the 'Cultivation System' in the mid-nineteenth century, in Robert Cribb and Audrey Kahin, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, second edition, Lanham, Maryland, Scarecrow Press, 2004, 98–100. See also the essays by Thee Kian Wee and Anne Booth in Ewout Frankema and Frans Buelens, eds, *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development: The Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies Compared*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013.

[9] Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*, New York, The New Press, 1995, passim.

[10] The figures for Indonesian literacy rates in 1950 are from Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 2004, 133. Figures for Europe are from S.N. Broadberry and Kevin H. O'Rourke, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe: Volume 2, 1870 to the Present*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, 249.

[11] This comparison was made by Reba Lewis, in her book *Indonesia: Troubled Paradise*, London, Robert Hale, 1962. A similar figure can be reached from information on the following website: Nationmaster, 'Physicians Per 1000 people: Countries Compared', http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Health/Physicians/Per-1,000-people, accessed 4 April 2016.

[12] See the graphs and other information provided in Indexmundi, 'Indonesia: Life Expectancy at Birth', http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indonesia/life-expectancy-at-birth, accessed 4 April 2016.

than 10 % in 1950, is estimated to be 92 %, the same figure as in the USA 100 years ago. Although in recent years economists have predicted that as early as 2050 Indonesia may be the fourth most productive nation in the world, nevertheless this is not an indication of the current standard of living of the average citizen in this nation of more than a quarter of a billion people.

Indonesia and 'the Third World'

Given the situation described in the previous section, any study of Indonesian cinema over the first 90 years of its history needs to recognize that it has been a cinema created in a society with a history of colonial exploitation, resulting in standards of living not comparable with those of advanced capitalist societies. At the same time, Indonesia is a developing society with numerous strong and vital traditions going back over many centuries.

In fact the term 'Third World' has its origins in an Indonesian context, being a media-created term, popularized by the press in response to the historic 'Asia-Africa Conference' of newly emerging nations, held in the West Javanese city of Bandung in April 1955. The conference had been formally proposed by the Indonesian Prime Minister, Ali Sastroamidjojo, in response to interest both within Indonesia and from other new nations. The conference was attended by leaders of emerging nations in Asia and Africa, including Nehru from India, Nasser from Egypt, Chou En-lai from China, and Ho Chi Minh from North Vietnam. In the context of the Cold War, the Bandung Conference inspired the advent of the so-called 'Non-aligned Movement' in the early 1960s. The notion of the 'Third World' operative in the media at the time of the conference was that the 'First World' was the capitalist world of the USA and its allies, the 'Second World' was the socialist world of the Soviet Union and its allies, and the 'Third World' was broadly constituted by the rest, but particularly by the newly emerging and non-aligned nations, especially those that had been created by the removal of colonial regimes in the years subsequent to the Second World War.

Indian-born social theorist, Aijaz Ahmad, has argued that the notion of the 'Third World' that arose as a press response to the Bandung Conference was a term not arising 'from a people's movement … but as an ideology of already-constituted states' and hence was a term rooted in

the ideologies of local power elites.[13] Ahmad accepts that while there has been an 'everyday use' of the term, where in common parlance the 'Third World' simply refers to developing societies, the notion of Third World Theory (as an anti-colonial position after decolonization had occurred) has very few implications for praxis, in contrast to a term such as socialism, for ultimately it was simply a term that endorsed the various nationalisms of the elites in power in the newly emerged nations.[14]

However, the continuing relevance of the term 'Third World' has been argued by Kofi Buenor Hadjor, in his *Dictionary of Third World Terms*.[15] For Hadjor, the notion of the 'Third World' is primarily to be seen as a concept that highlights the quality and characteristic experience of people living in many developing societies, having its origins in the shared historical experience of colonialism, and so can highlight the continuing experience of peoples of the continents which have been excluded from power and wealth in the world. Additionally, Hadjor argues, the gulf between wealthy countries and Third World countries, exacerbated, if not created historically by colonialism, has been continued even after liberation from domination by colonial regimes, by the structure of economies and economic relations, the nature of participation in world markets, and the concentrations of international political power. Hadjor's stress on the character and quality of the *experience* of people living in developing societies—societies formed out of often dislocated, previously colonized regions—is particularly relevant to the study of film in Indonesia, for cinema engages directly with human experience.

The *Pancasila*—Visions of Hope

The Indonesian nation that emerged with formal independence in late 1949 was not without concepts. On 1 June 1945, a few months before his joint proclamation (with Mohammad Hatta) of Indonesia as a new, independent nation, on 17 August 1945, Sukarno, subsequently to become

[13] Aijaz Ahmad, 'Three Worlds Theory: End of a Debate', in Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures,* London and New York, Verso, 2008, 292. Other evaluations have been given of the Bandung Conference. See Antonia Finnane and Derek MacDougall, eds, *Bandung 1955: Little Histories*, Melbourne, Monash Asia Institute, 2010.

[14] Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, 307–8

[15] Kofi Buenor Hadjor, *A Dictionary of Third World Terms*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1992. See the 'Introduction', especially pp. 9–10.

Indonesia's first president, delivered an impromptu speech entitled 'The Birth of Pancasila' to the Investigating Committee for the Preparation of Independence.[16] The speech outlined what in effect were the fundamental principles of the nation-to-be, and the five principles outlined in this speech were written into the 'Preamble to the Constitution' and are still accepted today. In brief the five principles are as follows:

> Nationalism (the setting up of one National State upon the unity of one Indonesian land from the tip of Sumatra to Irian, that is, West Papua)
>
> Internationalism (a belief in the brotherhood of the world and the family of nations)
>
> *Mufakat* or *Permusjawaratan-perwakilan* (unanimity arising out of the deliberation of representatives)
>
> Social Democracy leading to prosperity for all
>
> Belief in one God, with the proviso that each citizen has the right to worship according to his own beliefs

These five principles are typical of Sukarno's thinking in the way in which he sets out to provide a means of reconciling potential conflicts in a society as varied as Indonesia, and in a world that in 1945 had been beset by extremes. Indeed, as early as 1926 Sukarno had published an essay, 'Nationalism, Islam and Marxism', on the need for future leaders of a new nation to find forms of reconciliation between Islam and Marxism.[17] By 1945 Sukarno's views of what was necessary for the new nation were even more comprehensive, and the grounds for the *Pancasila* are very logical. For Sukarno, even though the creation of a whole new nation was indispensable for ending colonialism, in the future nation Indonesian nationalism would be tempered by a belief in humanism and in human rights that are arrived at by international guarantees. The limitations of Western democracy—based as it is on the majority view—will be tempered by the third principle, the idea of representatives not only voting for a belief, but all coming to a consensus by a process of mutual deliberation (*permusjawaratan-perwakilan*). In Indonesia *mufakat* or *permusy-*

[16] Sukarno, 'The Pantja Sila' (extract from 'The Birth of Pantja Sila'), in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds, *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945–1965*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1970, 40–9.

[17] Sukarno's essay, 'Nationalism, Islam and Marxism' is excerpted in Feith and Castles, *Indonesian Political Thinking*, 357–61.

awaratan is a village-based form of consultation whereby agreement is reached not by the achievement of a simple majority, however small, but through a process of mutual discussion in which, ideally, all considerations are worked through, and an eventual consensus of all present is reached. A further limitation of Western 'political democracy'—which, as Sukarno saw it, guaranteed the right to vote but not freedom from poverty—is tempered by the fourth principle, with its concern for what Sukarno called 'social democracy' or prosperity for all. Finally, the dangers of religious fundamentalism and sectarianism were countered by the fifth principle, the view that Indonesia is not a purely secular society, it is based in a belief in one God, but it is not to be an Islamic state nor a society subscribing to one religion. So Indonesia is a society with a predominantly Islamic population, but is not an Islamic state.

In concluding his speech, Sukarno simplified the five principles into three: 'socio-nationalism, socio-democracy and belief in God', the compound word 'socio-nationalism' implying the tempering of nationalism, and the compound word 'socio-democracy' implying the social justice inherent in proper consultation and distribution of wealth. The third and fourth principles of *Pancasila* (mutual consultation and social justice, or prosperity for all) are closely interconnected, and, Sukarno insisted, had indigenous origins, being based on interrelated processes of both consultation and mutual support practised by villagers in many regions for centuries. Having already, towards the end of this speech—with characteristic grandiloquent logic—simplified the five principles to three, at the very end he then concluded that they could be further simplified into one basic principle, namely *gotong royong*, and that Indonesia was a *gotong royong* state, a state based on mutual assistance, acts of service performed by each in the interest of all, moreover, arguing further that '*gotong royong*' was a more dynamic concept than the family principle, because it was more inclusive. In concluding his 1945 speech, Sukarno invoked the *Pancasila* and the role it would play, thus:

> The principle of *gotong royong* between the rich and the poor, between the Muslim and the Christian, between non-Indonesians and those of foreign descent who become Indonesians. This, brothers and sisters, is what I propose to you.[18]

[18] Sukarno, 'The Pantja Sila', in Feith and Castles, *Indonesian Political Thinking*, 49.

What is this principle of *gotong royong*? Co-proclamator and first Vice-President, Mohammad Hatta, explains the relevance of the term in a speech given in November 1956:

> Because landed property in the old Indonesia belonged to the village community, village democracy could not be eliminated, regardless of efforts to suppress it. On the basis of the common ownership of the soil, each individual, in carrying out his economic activities, felt that he had to act in accordance with common consent. Consequently, one finds that all heavy work that could not be done by one individual person, was performed by the system of *gotong rojong*, mutual assistance … These five indigenous elements of democracy—the general meeting, mutual consultation, *gotong rojong* or mutual assistance, the right to make joint protests, and the right to remove oneself from the king's or prince's authority—were esteemed within our national movement as solid principles of social democracy that was to become the basis for the future government of a Free Indonesia.[19]

Hatta had also long believed that Indonesian societies were cooperative in nature, as seen in his exposition here of indigenous Indonesian democracy, at the core of which is the fourth principle of *social democracy*, in contrast to the Western notion simply of political democracy. Nevertheless, Hatta in this same speech went on to qualify this enthusiasm for so-called 'traditional Indonesian democracy' in the following way:

> Subsequent analysis, made quietly and free from the desire to idealize everything that is indigenous with us, has shown that the good points of our village democracy cannot all be applied indiscriminately at the level of the state.[20]

Hatta's speech was given at a time when Sukarno was beginning to introduce political notions that would evolve by 1959 to his idea of Guided Democracy, which would replace the parliamentary democracy of the early and mid 1950s and be governed by a *Gotong Royong* Cabinet headed by himself. The above statement by Hatta appears to be a direct reference to the evolving political thinking of Sukarno, from whom Hatta was becoming increasingly alienated.

[19] Mohammad Hatta, 'Past and Future', excerpted in Feith and Castles, *Indonesian Political Thinking*, 37–8.
[20] Ibid., 38–9.

Anthropologist John R. Bowen has made a study of the history and various uses of the term '*gotong royong*'. He affirms that the term does indeed correspond to 'genuinely indigenous notions of moral obligation and generalized reciprocity' widely found in villages across the Indonesian archipelago, though in practice the forms it takes (and the words used for its numerous forms in different parts of the archipelago) vary—from forms of strictly calculated reciprocal shared labour, to generalized shared obligations, particularly within and between families, to collective labour mobilized by authorities.[21] But he also demonstrates how it has been reworked by the state, in different ways at different points in Indonesian political history, not only by Sukarno, but also in the Suharto New Order period, when in the village context it became a cultural-ideological instrument for the mobilization of village labour in the interest of 'national development'.

It remains to say something about why the fifth principle of the *Pancasila* was so important. Although 88 % of the population today is at least nominally Muslim, there are significant communities—indeed whole regions of Indonesia—comprised predominantly of people practising other religions. Bali remains predominantly Hindu, and parts of Western and Eastern Indonesia are predominantly Christian. Some islands still contain remnants of megalithic religions.

Until the thirteenth century, much of the Indonesian archipelago was predominantly Hindu-Buddhist or animist. Islam began to establish itself as the dominant religion in Java and Sumatra in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, brought there by trading links with India, the Middle East, and even southern China. If Islam came to the Indonesian archipelago through trade, conversion to Islam, particularly in the courts, as far as can be ascertained, was facilitated by learned Muslim mystics and holy men claiming supernatural powers.[22] In Java Islam had become the dominant religion by the end of the sixteenth century, the predominating form of Islam in Java at the time being a form of Sufism. However, the Islamic modernism movement that emerged in the nineteenth century rejected mysticism, and the form of Islam that subsequently came to predominate was Sunni. In addition to a diversity of changing Islamic

[21] John R. Bowen, 'On the Political Construction of Tradition: *Gotong Royong* in Indonesia', *Journal of Asian Studies* 45 (3), May 1986, 546.

[22] M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1200*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2008, Chapter 1.

beliefs and practices, other religions also thrived in the region that we now know as Indonesia. Bali remained predominantly Hindu, despite the large conversion to Islam in immediately neighbouring Java and in many other parts of the Malay Archipelago. Moreover, some parts of the archipelago colonized by the Dutch in the following centuries were converted from animism to Christianity, for example the Batak area of North Sumatra, and in Eastern Indonesia, the islands of Flores, and West Timor. Some societies, such as the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia, and the island of Nias off the west coast of North Sumatra, still to varying degrees retain elements of megalithic religions and practices. Even while adopting new religions, whether Islam or Christianity, many parts of Indonesia retained their traditional regional cultural practices, known as *adat*. For example, the Minangkabau people in the highlands of West Sumatra converted to Islam during the sixteenth century, but retained their traditional matrilineal inheritance laws and social organization.[23] Indonesia has therefore often been referred to as a syncretic society, not so much due to the diversity of ethnic groups and religions found there, but due to the fact that in any one region the cultures that evolved can be seen still to retain a range of different layers of earlier cultural and religious influences, and that within Indonesian Islam there are vestiges of Hindu-Buddhist sensibility, by and large making Indonesian Islam rather different from what is found in the Middle East.[24]

This diversity of religious backgrounds and tolerance for their surviving traditions has been reflected in many arts, for example in the Indonesian shadow puppet plays with their characters and stories derived from Hindu mythology. These puppet plays have been regarded throughout the twentieth century as a significant national treasure, and regularly performed in many parts of Muslim Java. This use of stories from Hindu mythology is also found in the cinema. While many Indonesian popular films, such as *Sembilan Wali* ('The Nine Saints', 1984) and *Sunan Kalijaga* (1983) have dramatized stories from the early Muslim era, there are also numerous examples of films with pre-Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist (and earlier) mythological characters and stories. A key example is the series of popular films made in the 1980s about the spirit queen of the Southern Ocean, Nyi Roro Kidul, a mythical but powerful figure exiled

[23]Taufik Abdullah, 'Adat and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau', *Indonesia* 2, October 1966, 4–9.

[24]J.D. Legge, *Indonesia*, Sydney, Prentice-Hall, 1980, 60.

to the bottom of the ocean, regarded as the mystical consort of the sultans of Jogjakarta. Scholars have seen her origins in pan-Indonesian ancestral figures with links to fertility and the welfare of the land, but have also linked her with the ambiguous Hindu goddess, Durga, and even to Buddhist figures.[25] There are also films with leading characters whose religion is Christianity, as seen in 5 of the 13 feature films written and directed by one of the two most prominent directors of the 1970s and 1980s, Teguh Karya.

Although in the *Pancasila* Sukarno implicitly recognizes the diversity of religions in Indonesia, in his writings in the period prior to independence he did not address the multi-ethnic nature of the society to any great degree, and to some extent ideas of ethnic diversity and regional cultures were regarded by members of the independence movement as a Dutch attempt to keep discussion within terms that saw the Netherlands East Indies as made of up 'traditional' rather than potentially 'modern' societies. But in 1950, with the formal incorporation of these outer islands into the new nation—many of which had come under Dutch control again during the struggle for independence—*Pancasila* principles were amplified with the adoption of the new national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ('Unity in Diversity').

The five principles, the *Pancasila*, were adopted by the political elite in 1945, and have been accepted by the people generally, but that did not prevent aspects of the *Pancasila* being controversial and leading to conflicts with the central government. A notable example is the series of Darul Islam rebellions, with their demand for an Islamic state. These rebellions that broke out in the late 1940s in West Java, South Sulawesi and elsewhere were only finally suppressed in the 1960s. During the Suharto New Order period, *Pancasila* was hijacked, with the promotion of the notion of '*Pancasila* Democracy' (different from *Pancasila* itself) being used in a perverse way under the dictator Suharto as a means of depoliticization, demanding that the whole society become a consensual state—a floating mass without opinions—in which parties would not have organizations at the village level, and where criticism of the national leadership was not

[25] Roy E. Jordaan, 'The Mystery of Nyai Lara Kidul, Goddess of the Southern Ocean', *Archipel* 28, 1984, 99–116; Robert Wessing, 'A Princess from Sunda: Some Aspects of Nyai Roro Kidul', *Asian Folklore Studies* 56, 1997, 317–53.

appropriate.[26] Nevertheless, the original five principles still held currency. Writing in 1994, nearly 50 years after the formulation of the principles, Douglas Ramage, who had interviewed numerous key stakeholders in the society (including religious leaders, leaders of political factions and even members of the army), discovered that the original five principles were seen as a means of—at least in principle—reducing the potentiality for extreme kinds of conflict and discrimination that could emerge in the society.[27] In the history of Indonesian cinema itself, aspects of the *Pancasila* have operated as key discourses in a number of fine films over many years. Djayakusuma's dynamic and optimistic *Tjambuk Api* ('Whipfire', 1958), discussed in Chap. 4, tells a story of semi-employed villagers deploying *gotong royong* in their joint efforts to build an irrigation system to irrigate their parched village. Nya Abbas Akup's prophetic *Matt Dower* (1969), discussed in Chap. 6, an allegory of the power struggle between Suharto and Sukarno, satirizes consensus as a way of enforcing conformity, and links this to attempts by the new regime to keep the people ignorant. Slamet Rahardjo's 1990 film, *Langitku Rumahku* ('My Sky, My Home') explicitly uses the fourth principle of *Pancasila* (prosperity for all) to critique the extreme gulf between the super-rich and the very poor at the height of Suharto's New Order regime.

Phases in National Political History

The history of Indonesia since the achievement of independence in late 1949 has been complex and at times very turbulent. Here I divide this history into five main eras, each marked by changes in the political system and/or changes in leaders. The ethos of each period is quite distinctive, as is the way power has been exercised. In nearly the first 50 years of independence, there were only two presidents, Sukarno and Suharto; while since the fall of Suharto in 1998 there have been five presidents. The main

[26]See the exposition of the concept of a floating mass and of concomitant depoliticization—supposedly a process of freeing the people from political manipulation—in the excerpted writings of Ali Moertopo, head of the intelligence organization OPSUS, in David Bourchier and Vedi Hadiz, eds, *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 45–9.

[27]Douglas E. Ramage, 'Pancasila Discourse in Suharto's late New Order', in David Bourchier and John Legge, eds, *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994, 156–67.

watershed during the first 50 years was the annihilation of the political left that accompanied the takeover of control by General Suharto from October 1965 onwards. Over this first 50 years the film industry was by and large strong and productive in the earlier years of each presidency. But the industry went into decline later during both the presidencies, due to political turmoil—as occurred during the Guided Democracy period—and changing economic factors. For example, control of film distribution from the late 1980s onwards by President Suharto's foster brother, Sudwikatmono, resulted in the favouring of imported films in his chain of cinemas, rather than the national product.

The Experiment with Democracy in the Early Sukarno Period (1950–59)

Democracy was embraced with enthusiasm, although initially members of parliament were appointed, not elected, and the first elections were only held in 1955. Both before and after the elections the major problem was the inability of parties to reach agreement on fundamental matters, such as a new Constitution or even the composition of cabinets. The divisions between the parties were primarily between Muslim parties (Nahdlatul Ulama and Masyumi) and non-Muslim parties (the Partai Nasional Indonesia and the Partai Kommunis Indonesia).[28] Major differences were over the role religion should play in the state (there were still demands from politicians for an Islamic state), and over the extent to which the state should prioritize densely populated Java, or the outer islands. The results of the election of September 1955 only continued this stalemate. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), with its very effective creation of organization at village level, and its demand for land reform, was beginning to supplant the strength of the less politically active, secular Indonesian Nationalist Party. In the course of the decade there were increasing demands from sectors of the military for a greater say in national affairs.

In the face of an ineffective parliament, and army rebellions in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi demanding more autonomy from the centre, in March 1957, at the urging of army head, General Nasution, President

[28]The fullest account of this period is in Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1962. For a succinct account of the later Guided Democracy period and its culmination in the liquidation of the left, see Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Chapter 20.

Sukarno declared martial law, placing the army in charge over the whole country and thus ending parliamentary democracy.[29] In December 1957, anti-Dutch sentiments resulted in the takeover by workers of Dutch enterprises in Indonesia. Nasution, using his powers under martial law, determined that these enterprises would henceforth be managed by the army, thus giving an assured financial basis for increased army power and corruption. Earlier, in February 1957, Sukarno had announced his cherished proposal for a '*Gotong Royong* Cabinet', where the nation would be governed at cabinet level by representatives of major political parties and by representatives of functional groups—workers, peasants and intellectuals.

Guided Democracy (1959–65)

In July 1959 Sukarno moved to dissolve the Constituent Assembly, abolish the 1950 Constitution and return to the Constitution of 1945 that accorded special powers to the president.[30] On 17 August 1959, the anniversary of the declaration of independence, Sukarno announced the main planks of Guided Democracy: the Constitution of 1945, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Identity. Sukarno thus accorded considerable powers to himself, not only as the mediator of consultation, but as a national leader. From the late 1950s until 1965 Indonesia was governed by a number of consultative bodies, headed by Sukarno's own '*Gotong Royong* Cabinet', with an alliance between nationalism, religion and communism, known as *Nasakom*, as the official state ideology. Power in the society depended on access to Sukarno or to the army. Sukarno adopted a policy of economic nationalism, attempting to develop the state without foreign investment, but the resources available for this were limited. By 1965 inflation was running at 500 %. The turbulence of the era was further inflamed with the Indonesian invasion of West Papua, and with Sukarno's policy of confronting Malaysia, both giving an increased role to the army. Stability in these years depended on Sukarno's political skills in playing off against each other the Communist Party with its huge membership and its agenda of social reform, and the army, which was becoming increasingly indispensable.[31] By 1963, within

[29] Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 292.

[30] Ibid., 302.

[31] For a discussion of the various changing centres of power and their dynamics, over this period, see Donald Hindley, 'Political Power and the October 1965 Coup in Indonesia', *Journal of Asian Studies* 26 (2), February 1967, 237–49.

the framework of Guided Democracy the Communist Party had begun to implement new land reform laws in the countryside, passed in 1960 by the Indonesian parliament. Their activism increased conflict with Muslim landlords and this led to bloodshed. The Communist Party was also very active on the cultural front, through its arts body, *Lekra*.

In the foregoing I have discussed the array of unresolved conflicts between political elites, which increased political tensions during the early independence period. However, a concentration only on conflicts between elite groups creates a misleading picture of the society at the time. Daniel Lev has outlined positive aspects of this period, in particular for women and in legal matters.[32] Lev emphasizes that during the early independence period more women went to school, entered professions and the public service, formed their own organizations, were active in politics and lobbied on numerous issues. This is in contrast to their expected docility in the subsequent New Order period. Lev accounts for this primarily in terms of the prevailing ideologies and ethos of the period, a result of the better education, erudition and commitment to change of the political leadership of the time, including President Sukarno, who in 1947 had written a book, *Sarinah*, about the national revolution and the roles women could play in bringing about change.[33] The presence of women's organizations in the Sukarno period, and their vigour, is abundantly clear in the political satire filmed in 1955, *Tamu Agung* ('Exalted Guest'), however humorously they are presented.

From Abortive Army Purge to Systematic Annihilation of the Left (30 September 1965)

Any semblance of balance in the society was fatally upset with the events of 30 September 1965, and the massacre of the Indonesian left that followed over the next year. On that night the attempted arrest of key army generals by a small military force led by some left-wing members of the palace guard, but using relatively untrained and ill-prepared troops, resulted in the killing of six high-profile generals, some in their homes when being arrested, and others later at the rebel's headquarters, Halim

[32] Daniel Lev, 'On the Other Hand?', in Laurie J. Sears, ed., *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, 191–202.
[33] Ibid., 197.

Perdanakusuma Airbase. The leaders of this group referred to themselves as simply 'The 30th September Movement', but others referred to their actions as an abortive communist coup that had the involvement of large sections of the Indonesian Communist Party. Most recent research, by John Roosa, however, provides more evidence to the effect that these bungled events were intended as a specifically targeted army purge rather than an attempted *coup d'état*, the aim being to bring these generals before Sukarno in the hope they would be sacked if not indicted, a plan that had to be aborted once some of the generals had been killed. Roosa also provides evidence to support the view that the plot may have been instigated initially by the leader of the PKI, D.N. Aidit, together with the head of the PKI 'Special Bureau', Sjam, as a pre-emptive move, in response to signs of illness in Sukarno, and that this attempted purge had been initiated without the knowledge of other Communist Party leaders or the rank and file, though with some involvement of other elements of the armed forces, including the air force, and army unit commanders in Central Java.[34] Crouch believes that the extent to which army members, were also involved in instigating events in Jakarta, as well as the related events in Central Java, has not yet been fully determined.[35]

The '30th September Movement' was crushed within 24 hours by General Suharto, in command of *Kostrad*, 'army security'. Recent access to temporarily declassified US government documents suggests that, at the time, both the Indonesian military and the US government believed some form of coup attempt by communists was possible, and had made contingency plans for this eventuality. However, both feared that a strategic pre-emptive strike by the military would not be accepted by the society. General Suharto named the leadership of the Communist Party as the primary instigators of an attempted coup, at the same time incriminating communist rank-and-file members. Sukarno, in speeches he made in October 1965, defended the PKI. Despite this, there followed over the next six months the mass slaughter of alleged members of the PKI throughout Indonesia (estimates range between 500,000 and 1 million), as an army-led undercover mass response, aided by Muslim youth, to the very public nightmare of the killings of the six generals in Jakarta. For

[34] John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

[35] Harold Crouch, 'Fatal Errors' (Review of Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*), *The Review of Politics* 69, 3 (Summer 2007), 500–2.

Sukarno, any hopes of achieving social justice (as the fourth principle of *Pancasila*) via political change in the society, with aid from the huge Indonesian Communist Party, had foundered, suddenly and dramatically, in the ill-conceived and bungled events of the night of 30 September and its aftermath. The subsequent arrests, long-term imprisonment and massacres were organized under the direction of the army, with support from Islamic landowning groups, and others with a long-standing resentment or fear of the PKI.

A state-sponsored New Order version of the events of 30 September 1965 is the grotesque four-and-a-half-hour propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI* (The Treason of the Indonesian Communist Party in the 30 September Movement), produced in 1984 at the height of the Suharto New Order.[36] A compelling reply to this film is, in effect, Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), a documentary film that interviews at length individuals involved in the mass execution of alleged communists in the period 1965–66, and gets them to reconstruct events in which they were engaged.

The Suharto New Order Regime (1966–98)

The result of these events was the coming to power of General Suharto as the second Indonesian president, and the establishment of the highly authoritarian, military-backed 'New Order' regime, which was to last 32 years, until Suharto was forced to resign in May 1998.

Suharto was backed by the major Western powers, largely due to his anti-communist stance, and because Indonesia was an oil-rich nation. With assistance from Western advisors he initiated a programme of national development economically funded by foreign investment. Suharto continued to govern under the Constitution of 1945, which accorded special powers to the president, and which had been reinvoked by Sukarno in 1959. To ensure his electoral success, with close advisors from the army Suharto developed his own political party, Golkar, which relied not only on Suharto's initial popularity but also on the support of the civil servants, who were pressured to vote for it, and on the army.[37] Additionally, the army

[36] For a discussion of this film, see Katherine E. McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past*, Singapore, NUS Press, 2007.

[37] For an account of the establishment and use of Golkar, see R.E. Elson, *Suharto: A Political Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 186–90.

came to have a central role in the society, assigned a dual function, known as '*dwifungsi*', the army not only operating within itself, but with key state bureaucracies having army representatives placed in them to monitor and control policy and its implementation. These political developments were accompanied by increased surveillance of the population by expanded intelligence organizations, extending even to the neighbourhood watch system, initially established by the Japanese during the occupation of 1942–45. Under Suharto political parties were suppressed, with only three parties allowed to participate in national politics, including the powerful Golkar. Furthermore, there were restrictions placed on who could stand for elections, and 100 members of the armed forces were appointed to parliament.

Under the Suharto New Order regime Indonesia achieved sustained economic growth of 7 % per annum over a 25-year period. On some criteria the number of poor in Indonesia in the mid 1960s was as high as around 50 %, with this figure dropping to about 17.5 % in 1996.[38] While the country did develop economically under Suharto, the fruits of this development were accorded primarily to the elites, via what was widely referred to as KKN (*kolusi*, *korupsi*, nepotism), and while the standards of living of significant numbers of the population did increase in comparison with the dire situation in the mid 1960s, substantial poverty remained. Suppression of dissent by individuals and social groups inside Indonesia, carried out by the armed forces (especially in West Papua and in Aceh), and by intelligence organizations throughout the society, was accompanied by adventurism and imperialism abroad, with the invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, again with loss of life in the hundreds of thousands. Even in Jakarta in the 1980s there were mass killings, with the Tanjung Priok massacre of September 1984, when hundreds of Islamic youth from the port area protesting the army's intrusion into a mosque, were shot down at night; and also with the 'Petrus Affair' when, in a government-organized national 'clean up', numerous criminals in Indonesian cities were hunted down at night, their bodies found in streets the next morning.[39] Reporting of these events in the press and on

[38] See the discussions of Suharto's economic record in Anne Booth, *Economic Change in Modern Indonesia: Colonial and Post-colonial Comparisons*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, Chapters 4 and 8.

[39] For detailed information on the Tanjung Priok massacre, see Tapol, ed., *Indonesian Muslims on Trial*, London, Tapol Publications, 1987.

television was extremely limited, due to censorship in accordance with the policy of the need to keep the people 'a floating mass without opinions'.

In the late 1980s Suharto announced a new policy of openness, known as '*keterbukaan*', a political strategy in response to new alliances forming within the army, beginning to demand change. While journalists and figures in popular culture began to be more openly critical of the government, taking advantage of '*keterbukaan*', this 'openness' proved to be short-lived. In mid 1994 three highly popular weekly magazines were banned, for they had fostered controversies that Suharto saw as threatening his authority. In mid 1996 the army invaded the Jakarta headquarters of the opposition party, the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, where dissidents had taken refuge, their arrest and abrupt removal leading to further demonstrations on the streets. In late 1997 the Asian economic crisis posed a threat to Suharto's reputation as an economic manager and led to increased scrutiny of corruption both within his family and within the business elite with whom the Suharto family was connected. With the nation in crisis, in May 1998 there were increased student demonstrations. This resulted in the deaths of at least 13 students on two university campuses in Jakarta, shot by army personnel on 12 May. There was also violence against the Chinese, including rioting and the setting of fires across the capital, Jakarta, and other cities in Indonesia, in which an estimated at least 1000 people died. Further protests could not be contained, and further repression would have resulted in further deaths. Suharto had no choice but to resign or have his authority and legitimacy further undermined. He resigned as president on 21 May 1998.

The Post-Suharto 'Reformasi' *Period*

With the fall of Suharto and the lifting of the repressive New Order state apparatus, numerous divisions in the society suddenly emerged, with the open expression of demands for independence for East Timor (achieved via a referendum held in September 1999), and for West Papua (which eventually came under further repression), and with militant Islamic organizations surfacing in Java and the Moluccas, leading for a time to sectarian conflicts. However, there have been many substantial advances during the post-Suharto *Reformasi* period. Elections are held regularly. In the space of some 16 years there have been five presidents, in contrast to only two presidents in the previous half-century. Importantly, state finances are now not so centralized in Jakarta, for there has been a high degree

of devolution of the control of finances to regional areas. There is now relative freedom of the press, characterized by robust reporting of scandals. The current president, Joko Widodo, a furniture businessman and highly popular former mayor of the Central Javanese town of Solo, and subsequently of Jakarta, came to office in 2014 without long-term connections with political elites nor with the army. Nevertheless, powerful interest groups and individuals in Indonesia too often regard themselves and their actions as beyond the law.

The Regulation of Cinema Under the Suharto New Order Regime

A discussion of how the repressive Suharto New Order regime controlled expression within the cinema in Indonesia, and also of the controversies and debates between left and right during the turbulent Guided Democracy period, is to be found in Krishna Sen's *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*.[40] Sen's intrepidly researched book, with its political focus on the New Order, addresses aspects of Indonesian cinema not emphasized in this book, and so an exposition of its key arguments is highly relevant as background to this study.

Sen's book is less a study of the cinema itself, in its variety, and more a study of New Order state control of the film industry through its institutions, particularly through the role played by the Indonesian Department of Information (Departemen Penerangan - known as Deppen), and also of the way the New Order ethos and its ideologies came to permeate aspects of film in Indonesia with the repression of the left at the beginning of the New Order period. Among the areas explored in Sen's book are the changing nature of censorship under the New Order, and who controlled it, as the state began to exclude political interest groups other than its own; changing government policies for regulating the film industry, whether it be support provided for film importers, distributors and exhibitors, or support for local film production; the use of fiction film as a means of propaganda, particularly in the service of promoting the image of Suharto in the 1980s at a time when the legitimacy of his rule might be challenged after nearly 20 years of rule without proper elections; the way in which a more conservative view of women (in contrast to that which appeared during the Indonesian revolution and

[40] Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, London, Zed Press, 1994.

the years of radicalism under Sukarno) came to dominate the Indonesian cinema during the New Order period. Sen also explores aspects of Indonesian cinema lost or suppressed after 30 September 1965, particularly the work of the left-wing director, Bachtiar Siagian. The book contains a fascinating section about the way in which the restructuring of import monopolies in 1975, in order to make those Indonesian companies involved in importing films more competitive in the international market, ultimately resulted over a ten-year period in the establishment of a dominant monopoly on imports controlled by President Suharto's foster brother, Sudwikatmono.[41]

Under the previous Sukarno government, the Film Censorship Board (Badan Sensor Film) was usually chaired by a woman, and comprised 24 state officials, mainly from the Departments of Education and Culture and the Department of Information, and 9 representatives of the various political parties. However, as Sen caustically puts it, during the Suharto New Order censorship moved from being an instrument for the protection of the public to an instrument for the protection of the state, a means of enhancing state security, in effect another arm of the government security apparatus.[42] Moreover, in the late 1960s, in line with the diminished role of political parties under the New Order, political parties were excluded from the Censorship Board. By 1979, two-thirds of the Censorship Board of 37 came from government departments, and one-third of these were from security organizations, including the police and the intelligence organization, *Bakin* (Badan Koordinasi Intel—Body for the Coordination of Intelligence). Censorship was achieved not only through the censorship of completed films, but through pre-censorship, at the script stage, and of course through the encouragement to self-censor.

Significantly, no films were made during the New Order period about the role during the revolution of the civilian leaders Sukarno and Hatta, but President Suharto's earlier exploits as an army partisan were built up quite out of proportion. These Suharto propaganda films, particularly the film *Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI* mentioned earlier, also demonized the left. Moreover, as Sen demonstrates, they aspired not just to create a leadership myth around Suharto, but to create a belief that the Indonesian revolution was primarily a military struggle in which the army were the real protectors of the young Indonesian nation, both during the Indonesian

[41] Ibid., 57–65.
[42] Ibid., 69.

revolution of the 1940s, and by means of the purging of communists in the 1960s.

Sen's study, concentrating as it does on the New Order period, was timely, for little was understood outside Indonesia of the complex mechanisms of repression operating at numerous levels of both civilian life and the film and media industries within Suharto's New Order Indonesia. *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, a political document in itself, with its unprecedented focus on the repressive mechanisms of the New Order state operating even in the film world, has been highly influential. However, with a few exceptions, in her book Sen primarily discusses those films that illustrate her arguments about state control, and the pervasiveness of state ideologies and state ethos. In contrast, I argue that there is more to Indonesian cinema than Sen addresses, even during the Suharto New Order period, and certainly Indonesian cinema in that period is not simply a reflection of the ideologies and ethos of the New Order state. My book does not attempt to challenge or replace the work of Krishna Sen, but rather to complement it with an exploration of those films that do succeed in creative engagement with their society, and particularly those films that explore Indonesian society in culturally and historically specific terms. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that many of the films I discuss (those produced between 1968 and 1998) were produced in a society the repressive ethos of which Sen has so well described.

Is There an Indonesian National Culture?

In 1991 anthropologist Karl Heider published his *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, the first book on Indonesian film written in English. Heider asserts that Indonesian films, in addition to using primarily the Indonesian language rather than regional languages, 'depict generalized Indonesian behaviour patterns … stripped of regional ethnic markers', and as a result are 'an important medium for the shaping of an emergent national culture'.[43] Heider's method is to characterize 'Indonesian culture' using a small number of basic principles, and to contrast it with 'American culture'. For Heider, whereas in American movies there is an emphasis on individual autonomy, inner states and the lone individual, in Indonesian cinema there is an emphasis on social embeddedness, interaction with

[43] Karl G. Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 10.

others, and the family group. Second, whereas in America the basic conflicts in life (and in movie plots) are between good and evil (and between 'good guys and bad guys'), in Indonesian films the basic conflicts are between order and disorder, and agents of order/disorder.[44] In my discussion of the film *Roro Mendut* in Chap. 1, I also emphasize the importance for Indonesians of the group, and of group identity. The contrast that Heider makes between cultures that prioritize social embeddedness rather than individual subjectivity is also to be found in my 1988 essay on Indonesian director Teguh Karya's film *November 1828*, where I also point to the importance of restraint and self-control in Indonesian culture.[45] So, there is a degree of accord between Heider's work and my own.

I have reservations regarding Heider's second major cultural pattern, namely, that in Indonesian cinema an opposition between order and disorder replaces an opposition between good and evil. Certainly there is an emphasis in Indonesian society (and especially in Java) on maintaining composure (*sopan santun*), on not displaying strong anger, and on arriving at consensus within the group. But, on the other hand, many books on narrative structure in film see a movement from order, to disorder, and a return to a new order, as a common narrative structure.[46] Heider recognizes this point, but he affirms that the order/disorder opposition is an exceptionally strong principle of Indonesian national culture, evidenced, he claims, by the fact that in Indonesian cinema negative characters are not primarily conceived as bad, but simply as agents of disorder, and frequently they are reincorporated into the 'new order' at the end of the film, without being punished. Heider illustrates this in a discussion of the film *Putri Giok* ('Jade Princess', 1981), a film that deals with an inter-racial romance between a Chinese girl and a Javanese young man.[47] At the end of the film, 'the disruptive element', the Chinese father, accepts the marriage and is accepted into the group. In my view, to some extent this structure may also be found in Teguh Karya's film *Ibunda* ('Mother', 1986), where the conservative and racially prejudiced Javanese businessman son-in-law, who

[44] Ibid., 29.

[45] See David Hanan, 'Film and Cultural Difference: *November 1828*', in Krishna Sen, ed., *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988, 25–47.

[46] Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, 257.

[47] Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, 133–40.

helps financially support his ageing mother-in-law, attempts to dominate his extended family with his views. However, how common is this structure that Heider isolates? And, more importantly, to what extent is Indonesian cinema a cinema where evil doing or moral culpability does not feature as a phenomenon in films, where evil goes unpunished and evil is not identified as such but only as a form of disruption? In *Ibunda* judgements *are* continually made about the moral implications of the behaviour of each of its numerous characters, even if consensus is achieved between them in the end. Moreover, it could be argued that the consensus achieved at the end of *Putri Giok* is in accord with government assimilationist policies relating to the Chinese in Indonesia during the Suharto New Order period, and that the narrative structure of *Putri Giok* embodies, indeed is designed to affirm, New Order ideologies. However, Heider's book does not have a concept of ideology, so he reads the film in terms of patterns of an emerging Indonesian 'national culture'. Not only does Heider not have a conception of ideology but, apart from noting a few facts about its history, he does not provide an account of the way the Indonesian nation has at times conceived of itself, particularly in the national philosophy, the *Pancasila*.

Heider's book contains chapters on a number of issues: how particular topics—such as the war of independence—are treated in different historical periods (which he accounts for in terms of changes in the 'national culture'); how 'the other' is constructed in an Indonesian popular film *Pengantin Pantai Biru* ('The Bride of the Blue Shore', an Indonesian version of *The Blue Lagoon*), where instead of 'noble' or 'ignoble' savages there are tribes of funny ape men; on how women are perceived in Indonesian films, on models for modernization, and on plot and tale types. But there are a number of core points that need to be made about Heider's work. First, Heider rarely engages with the aesthetics of a film and the complexities that arise as a result of numerous dimensions in a film. He dedicatedly, somewhat narrowly, follows his anthropological goal, which is to isolate key structures of what he calls 'a national culture'. At times the structures he has arrived at are simple stereotypes (the funny ape men in *Pengantin Pantai Biru*) rather than deep structures, stereotypes that appear to have been adopted by the filmmakers as a means of finding a formula for a cheap and quickly made genre film. In what sense can we say these represent deep structures of a national culture? And, as Heider admits, what he calls *auteur* films do not often fit into his structures, but tend to play against them.[48]

[48] Ibid., 38.

Here I wish to make a few points about the differences between Heider's approaches and mine. First, although I do engage with popular cinema, many of the films I discuss might be regarded as *auteur* films—certainly they are regarded as Indonesian classics, and these films, Heider admits, do not always fit his categories. Second, this book explores numerous films that engage with regional areas and therefore display, in Heider's terms, ethnic markers. It is usually, though not always, the '*auteur* directors' who engage with regional areas and regional cultures in their films, and do so in carefully thought out ways. Furthermore, rather than attempting to conceptualize a new emerging 'national culture' as manifested by the film industry, this book emphasizes the importance of regionalism and regional cultures, and insofar as it isolates cultural dominants that are found across much of the Indonesian archipelago, it sees many of these cultural dominants as pre-national in character.

In Chap. 3 I provide an outline history of nearly 90 years of Indonesian cinema, before, in Chap. 4, exploring six key films made in regional areas.

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CHAPTER 3

Intermittent Industries: Film Production in Indonesia over Nine Decades

Cinema came to the Netherlands East Indies in 1900, but local production of features did not commence for a quarter of a century. Throughout the colonial period, cinema ownership in the Dutch East Indies was largely in the hands of Chinese Indonesians and the Dutch. Actual production of feature films only commenced, in a very small way, in 1926. Prior to that the French company Pathé, and later the Colonial Institute in Holland, had commissioned 'actuality footage' to be shown around the world. By the time of the final withdrawal of the Dutch colonial administration at the end of 1949, only about 114 feature films had been produced. Since then, Indonesian cinema has gone through three main periods, paralleling the rise and fall of changing regimes. First, there is film in the Sukarno period following the achievement of independence in late 1949, with a decline during the Guided Democracy period. This was followed by the emergence of a highly commercial popular cinema quite early in the Suharto New Order period from 1970 onwards, which at the height of production on average was making 60 to 70 films per year, followed by a steep decline in the 1990s. Since the early 2000s we have seen the re-emergence in the *Reformasi* period of a smaller but more diverse and growing Indonesian cinema.

This chapter provides a survey of feature filmmaking in the Indonesian islands, over nearly 90 years, as a background to detailed discussion of particular films and movements in later chapters. In doing so it covers a number of specific areas. These include the pioneering work of Chinese

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Indonesian filmmakers as producers and directors in the first 25 years of production; the period of the Japanese occupation; the belated entry of indigenous filmmakers, particularly in the 1950s after the achievement of independence from the Dutch; and major directors and genres in each of the periods that followed independence. A recurring issue is the domination of the local market by foreign-produced films, whether it be by Hollywood or, at different times, by Indian and even Malay-language films made in Singapore, or as a result of local monopolies favouring foreign product, thus threatening the viability of the national product in its own market.

Much of the historical information in this chapter is drawn from a substantial body of work done by a small number of mostly Indonesian film historians, many of them associated with the film archive in Jakarta that holds the main collection of surviving feature films, Sinematek Indonesia. Early sections of this chapter, which outline the history of film production from 1926 to 1949, are based on information in *Sejarah Film 1900–1950: Bikin Film di Jawa* ('Film History 1900–1950: Making Films in Java') by the founding director of Sinematek Indonesia, a scriptwriter and former film director, Misbach Yusa Biran.[1] Research for Misbach's book commenced in the early 1970s, when some of the key Chinese producers and directors from the early period were still alive and could be interviewed. At that time some surviving films from this period were deposited with the newly established Sinematek. In fact of the 114 or so films known to have been made in the pre-1950 period, less than a dozen are known to survive, and most of these are held, in an incomplete form, at Sinematek Indonesia. Inviting controversy, Misbach does not see his major study of this early period as a history of early Indonesian film, on the grounds that 'Indonesia' only came into existence in late 1949, and also that many of the stories in these early films were derived from models from Hollywood,

[1] Misbach Yusa Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950: Bikin Film di Jawa*, Jakarta, Kommunitas Bambu dan Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2009. Another useful history is Salim Said, *Profil Dunia Film Indonesia*, Jakarta, Grafitipers, 1982. *Profil Dunia Film Indonesia* was translated into English as *Shadows on the Silver Screen: A Social History of Indonesian Film*, Jakarta, The Lontar Foundation, 1991. Other important sources include Sinematek Indonesia, eds, *Apa Siapa Orang Film Indonesia 1926–1978*, Jakarta, Sinematek Indonesia dan Yayasan Film Indonesia, 1979; J.B. Kristanto, ed., *Katalog Film Indonesia 1926–2005*, Jakarta, Penerbit Nalar bekerjasama dengan Fakultas Film dan Televisi, Institut Kesenian Jakarta, dan Sinematek Indonesia, 2005; S.M. Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep ke Sinepleks*, Jakarta, GPBSI, 1992.

or from the film industry in China.[2] Hence the book's secondary title: *Making Films in Java*. Nevertheless, Misbach does document ways in which by the late 1930s films produced in Java by Chinese Indonesian producers were associated with nationalism and the modern.

Film Production in the Netherlands East Indies

The first feature film produced in the Netherlands East Indies was *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* ('The Enchanted Monkey'). The film, based on a legendary romance about a monkey who was really a prince, was produced and directed in Bandung, West Java, in 1926 by a Dutchman, Heuveldorp, working with a German cameraman.[3] The film received funding from the Regent of Bandung, Raden Wiranatakusumah, and his daughter and other family members appeared in it, the film being made to celebrate West Javanese performance traditions. Wiranatakusumah had some five years earlier organized a large festival of Sundanese arts, so the making of *The Enchanted Monkey* can be seen as the continuation of initiatives in the revitalization of Javanese traditional arts, initiatives that in the 1920s had received encouragement from colonial authorities.

While the first feature film made in the Netherlands East Indies was a joint initiative of European and Javanese people, and retold a local legend and used local performance traditions, film production in the pre-independence period was a sector largely pioneered by the Chinese. In 1928 the Wong brothers made the first Chinese produced film, *Lily van Java*, which featured Chinese actors in a story about an arranged marriage. The Wong brothers had worked in the film industry in Shanghai, but immigrated to the Netherlands East Indies when the Shanghai industry faltered due to competition from films from the USA. Subsequently they made two crime films about local rogues, *Si Tjonat* and *Perampok di Preanger* ('The Robber from Priangan'), both released in 1929. With some interludes, due to intermittent financial difficulties, the Wong brothers stayed in the industry for the long haul, in 1948 making the first feature produced in Java after the Second World War. The roles they played

[2] Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950*, 45.

[3] A major resource on Indonesian cinema is the regularly updated website http://filmindonesia.or.id/movie, which includes synopses and credits of all feature films made since 1926. Much of this information is derived from J.B. Kristanto's original *Katalog Film Indonesia*.

in the emerging industry varied; often they hired out their studio facilities and their skills as technicians to others wishing to make films. Also in 1929 another Chinese producer, Tan Koen Yauw, born locally, produced the first of the adaptations of the popular story set in nineteenth-century Batavia, *Njai Dasima*, about the unfortunate fate of the native wife of an Englishman, who finds herself terrorized by a blackmailer. Although production would be intermittent well into the next decade, this film was followed by two sequels, also produced by Tan, one of them directed in 1932 by West Sumatran actor and journalist, Bachtiar Effendy, who would not direct another film until 1953. Tan Koen Yauw also produced the first feature film made outside of Java, a two-part silent feature, *Melatie van Agam* (1930), which included expensive location work in West Sumatra, and use of actors from a local Padang theatre company.[4]

The most successful of the Chinese producers was The Teng Chun. Born in Batavia in 1902, The Teng Chun went to high school in the USA. Attracted by filmmaking as a career, in 1925 he went to Shanghai to get experience in the industry there, and persuaded his father in Batavia to become an importer of films from Shanghai, rather than to export agricultural produce from Java. On his return from Shanghai he set up a production company, making his first film in 1931, the early sound film *Boenga Roos Dari Tjikembang* ('The Rose of Tjikembang'). The story for this film was based on a *peranakan* (Chinese Indonesian) story of romance within generations of families over many years, ending with an inter-racial marriage between a Chinese man and a Javanese woman.[5] Due to its poor sound quality the film was not a success, but The Teng Chun quickly found his most satisfactory formula for attracting audiences in Java at the time, which was to make Chinese ghost stories that included martial arts scenes. The Teng Chun produced and directed 11 of the 13 films produced in Java in the years 1933 to 1937. In 1935 he changed the name of

[4] Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950*, 108–12 and 155–63.

[5] '*Peranakan* Chinese' is a term used for the descendants of late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Chinese immigrants to the Indonesian-Malay archipelago. See Krishna Sen, '"Chinese" Indonesians in National Cinema', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7 (1), 2006, 174–5, for reflections on some these early Chinese produced films. Sen—basing her arguments on descriptions of this no longer surviving film—sees *Boenga Roos Dari Tjikembang* ('The Rose of Tjikembang') as a rare film in its positive presentation of a 'Chinese–Indigenous' inter-ethnic marriage, in which there is no demand for assimilation, unlike 50 years later in the Suharto era.

Fig. 3.1 A still from The Teng Chun's 1935 comedy film, *Tie Pat Kie Kawin* ('The Ghostly Pig Gets Married') (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

his company from Cino Motion Pictures to Java Industrial Film and built a studio near his home in North Batavia. The Teng Chun became the producer who made the most films in the Netherland East Indies prior to 1950, using various company names (Fig. 3.1).

In the 1930s more Europeans ventured into film production in the Netherlands East Indies, notably Philip Carli, who in the early 1930s made films starring his Eurasian wife, and Albert Balink, who came to the Indies in the mid 1930s. In each case their engagement with the industry was fairly brief, but Balink was a major innovator, first, in 1935 producing a fiction-documentary feature, *Pareh* ('Rice') and in 1937 producing a breakthrough feature film jointly with the Wong brothers, *Terang Bulan*.

Cinemas at the time were divided into first- and second-class cinemas, and remained racially discriminatory until the end of the colonial period. The first-class cinemas were exclusively for the Dutch and other Europeans, while the second-class cinemas were for the local populations, whether they were local people of Chinese descent or Malay-Indonesian descent (known as *pribumi*). There were, of course, cinemas that contained both first-class and second-class sections. According to Biran, in this first decade of production some films were made with predominantly Chinese audi-

ences in mind, others for the indigenous population, and some were made for European audiences.[6] In this early period the producer who made films for *pribumi* audiences was Tan Koen Yauw, his films having a substantial relationship both to local stories and to local performance traditions of *toneel* (stage play) and *stambul* (musical). On the other hand, the producer who targeted Chinese audiences was The Teng Chun. The director who targeted Dutch audiences was 'Flip' Carli, who earlier had made documentaries. All experienced problems of different kinds in attracting audiences. Europeans in Java preferred to view Hollywood films, rather than local films, in their first-class cinemas, and were not interested in films about Eurasian characters. There were much larger *pribumi* and Chinese audiences, but ticket prices in the second-class cinemas for these largely impoverished audiences were low and the cinemas were small. The introduction of sound further complicated the matter, for it raised the issue of the language of the film; Carli even made one film in Dutch. At one stage, in 1933, there was a rumour that Hollywood might set up production in Java, and this led to the exit of most of the Europeans, who realized they would not be able to compete.

The explosion in filmmaking, where production expanded from two films in 1933 to some 30 in 1941, occurred after another formula was found, in a film made jointly by Albert Balink and the Wong brothers, *Terang Bulan* ('Full Moon', 1937), with funding from Holland. *Terang Bulan* was strongly influenced by a Hollywood film highly popular in Java at the time, *The Jungle Princess* (1936), Dorothy Lamour's exotic breakthrough film, produced by Paramount, and set in Malaya, with Lamour as the jungle princess reared by nature—wearing a sarong and even speaking some lines in Malay—who attracts the interest of an American hunter visiting Malaya. In the case of *Terang Bulan*, although some scenes were set in Malaya, the film featured a fictional tropical island—compared in its beauty with Hawaii in advertising for the film—and the American songs sung by Dorothy Lamour in *The Jungle Princess* were replaced by the highly melodious Javanese *keroncong* sung by the film's star, West Javanese-born, Roekiah. In 1935 Balink had teamed up with the Wong brothers, formed a

[6] Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950*, 84–131. Biran provides a list of all the cinemas, and their owners, throughout the Dutch East Indies in 1936. This list shows there were 227 cinemas, with at least 50 %, owned by Chinese, at least 35 % owned by Dutch, and with only three clearly owned by *pribumi*, one of these owned by the Sultan of Solo in Central Java, another owned by the Sultan of Tengarong in Borneo (ibid., 403–19).

new company (ANIF), and brought in the Dutch documentary filmmaker, Mannus Franken, to film on location a semi-anthropological but fictional village idyll, *Pareh* ('Rice'). This film, with its target audience of homeland Dutch and its predictable Western orientalist framework, although technically better than previous films, succeeded neither in Java nor in Holland.[7] It was with *Terang Bulan* that a commercial formula was found, a basic genre that would attract audiences and so guarantee some future for the film industry in Java. Not only did *Terang Bulan* establish box office records in the Netherland East Indies, it was sold to RKO in Singapore.

We see here a process by which a popular film genre is developed in the Netherlands East Indies by using a popular Hollywood model and then indigenizing it, not only by using local actors and locations but also local performance traditions and particularly local music. As one would expect, numerous imitations and other Hollywood influenced films followed quickly upon this first really successful film. Subsequently a film using a similar formula, of mysterious tropical islands and *keroncong* songs, *Fatima*, recouped its outlays by 30 times within six months of its release. In 1939 The Teng Chun made his first film with *pribumi* characters and actors, *Alang Alang* ('Tall Grass'), modelled on Tarzan and introducing a new star, Mohammad Mochtar, who had a background in football and martial arts, and who quickly became known as 'Tarzan van Java'. In 1940 The Teng Chun produced a film with a clearly local title and theme, *Rentjong Atjeh* ('Acehnese Dagger'), shot on location near Jakarta, not in Aceh, and also starring Mohammad Mochtar (Figs. 3.2 and 3.3). Production in Java nearly tripled between 1939 and 1940, from 5 films to 14, and doubled again in 1941, with 30 films produced, many of them by new companies.

Significantly, *Terang Bulan* was promoted as an 'Indonesian Film', its stars advertised as 'pemain-pemain bangsa Indonesia pilihan' (top stars of the Indonesian race). This publicity angle, invoking the idea of a distinctive race of people, to be known as Indonesians, alluded to the emerging nationalist movement, exemplified for instance by the Youth Conference of 1928, where the Indonesian national anthem was first played, and the decision was made to support the emergence of a nation known as 'Indonesia', which would use *Bahasa Indonesia*, a form of Malay, as the preferred 'national language' to unify the new nation.

[7] Ibid., 160.

Fig. 3.2 The mobile unit of The Teng Chun's Java Industrial Film on location at Teluk Gong in the harbour area of Batavia (Jakarta) in 1940 for the production of *Rentjong Atjeh* ('Acehnese Dagger') (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

The explosion of the industry in 1940 and 1941 was accompanied by the movement of people working in theatre and journalism to the film world. This resulted in some *pribumi* working as writers and directors. These included West Sumatran-born journalist and playwright, Andjar Asmara, who directed for The Teng Chun's Java Industrial Film; journalist, stage director and actor, Inoe Perbatasari, who had known Sukarno in the early 1930s; and former union organizer and journalist Raden Ariffien, imprisoned by the Dutch between 1926 and 1930, who had joined Andjar Asmara's theatre company, Bolero, in tours of Sumatra and Singapore in the 1930s. At this time the directing of features was usually limited to rehearsing the actors and their dialogue, while matters of positioning of the camera, framing, and lighting were the responsibility of the technicians.[8]

Indonesian films now came to be associated with an ethos of a modern and changing Indonesia. Advertising for the remake of *Melatie*

[8] Ibid., 359–60.

Fig. 3.3 A poster for *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940). This is an early film marking a move for The Teng Chun's company from Chinese stories to local stories with characters from the Indonesian archipelago (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

van Agam (1940), produced by The Teng Chun, emphasized that it had been written by the progressive journalist, Parada Harahap, associated with the independence movement via his journal *Tjahaja Timoer* ('Eastern Light'). Similarities with Hollywood would be emphasized,

for Hollywood was seen as representing the modern. Chinese-owned Union Films, aiming in 1941 to gain prestige, invited a well-known member of the independence movement, medical doctor, Adenan Gani, to act in their film *Asmara Moerni*. Gani, who was later a minister in two Republican cabinets in the period 1945–49, as well as military governor of South Sumatra during the independence struggle, believed that developing the image of Indonesian-made films was part of the independence struggle.

The Japanese Occupation (1942–45)

The Japanese drive down through South East Asia in early 1942 resulted in the capture of Batavia early in March. All film studios were closed except one, which was taken over by the Japanese. The Japanese wanted to prevent the production of films that might oppose their presence. The Chinese in the colony were regarded as particularly suspect, the Japanese having been at war in China since 1937. Misbach emphasizes that the population initially welcomed the arrival of the Japanese, because it marked the defeat of the Dutch colonial regime. Misbach, who was 9 years old at the time, reports the population was amazed that the Dutch could be so quickly defeated.

The Japanese promised independence for Indonesia after the war, and integration into what they called the 'Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere', which would replace European colonial regimes dominating South East Asia. The Japanese banned all use of the Dutch language and made *Bahasa Indonesia* the official language, which even the Japanese had to learn. This was in contrast to the situation under the Dutch where it was regarded as impertinent to initiate a conversation with a Dutchman. Emerging nationalist leaders, Sukarno and Hatta, calculated that it was in the interests of the future nation for them to cooperate with the policies of the Japanese. However, some members of the independence movement, notably a future prime minister, Sjahrir, began to help form underground organizations to work against the Japanese, with the agreement of Sukarno and Hatta. The Japanese trained local youth in national defence, including Sudirman, later to become commander of the Republican Army in the independence struggle, and Suharto, later the nation's second president. The Japanese set up a cultural centre in Jakarta to foster the arts of the emerging nation, introduce Japanese cul-

ture to Indonesia and educate Indonesian artists.[9] Numerous artists and intellectuals congregated at this centre, including novelist Armin Pane, essayist Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana, and poet Chairil Anwar. Within this framework, young men who would later become film directors, West Sumatran-born Usmar Ismail, and Djayakusuma, who was Javanese, set up a drama group called Maya, performing plays written by Indonesians and by Western writers from countries not overtly antagonistic to Japan at the time. A small number of Indonesian directors—those regarded by the Japanese as connected with the independence movement—were invited to direct propaganda films.

Cinemas showed only feature films made in Japan, and Japanese newsreels and propaganda films, together with the small number of features made in Jakarta under Japanese patronage.[10] Cinema prices were adjusted to make film going accessible to more of the population, and the Japanese brought in projection equipment to facilitate travelling open-air cinemas taking their messages to the population. A documentary unit produced films on topics regarded by the Japanese as relevant to their aims in administering the society, for example on *gotong royong* as a means of facilitating collective work, and on the newly established neighbourhood watch system, known as *rukun tetangga* (harmony with neighbours), modelled on similar organizations in militarized Japan. At the time of their surrender the Japanese destroyed most of the films they made during the occupation. The *Katalog Film Indonesia* lists nine feature films produced in 1943 and 1944.[11] These films told stories that promoted the advantages of joining the Japanese youth military organization, Heiho. One film favourably contrasted the lives of the *romusha* (slave labourers conscripted for the war effort), with those of coolies under the Dutch. Curiously, in 1943 the Japanese made a documentary, *Calling Australia*, about the vir-

[9] Salim Said, *Shadows on the Silver Screen*, Chapter 2 ('Taking Lessons from the Japanese'), 31–6, provides an informative account of developments in this period, including an appreciation, by eyewitnesses, of the more systematic methods of film production used by the Japanese, where costs were not a primary consideration.

[10] For information on the uses of film and other media in the period of the Japanese occupation, see Aiko Kurasawa, 'Film as Propaganda Media in Java under the Japanese, 1942–1945', in Grant K. Goodman, ed., *Japanese Cultural Policies in South East Asia in World War II*, London, Macmillan, 1991; and Aiko Kurasawa, 'Propaganda Media on Java under the Japanese 1942–1945', *Indonesia* 44, October 1987, 59–116.

[11] Kristanto, *Katalog Film Indonesia 1926–2005*, 11–12.

tues of life in a prisoner-of-war camp, designed to 'soften up' Australians for the forthcoming Japanese invasion. The Australian documentary film, *Prisoners of Propaganda* (1987), written and directed by Graham Shirley, outlines the making of this propaganda film and includes excerpts from it.

Film in the Period 1945 to 1949

On 17 August 1945, Sukarno and Hatta, acting in the name of the Indonesian people, proclaimed the independence of Indonesia. The return of Dutch forces with the aim of re-establishing the Netherlands East Indies was delayed by various factors. With an increased presence of Dutch in Jakarta by early 1946, the Republican leadership moved to Jogjakarta in Central Java, which then became the centre of Republican resistance. Writers and theatre directors who supported the republic, many of them associated with the Maya group, moved also to Jogjakarta, and there training in film production was initiated on a small scale, including classes by Dr Huyung (also known as Hinatsu Heitaro), the Korean officer of the Japanese propaganda unit, who had directed *Calling Australia*, and who had elected to stay on in Java after the war. With cooperation from the Republican government he set up a film company in Jogjakarta in 1946, Stichting Hiburan Mataram (the Mataram Entertainment Company).

Film production only recommenced in 1948, with a film made in Jakarta by the Chinese producers Tan and **the** Wong brothers. The Dutch wanted to provide newsreels and entertainment for citizens of the numerous towns they had occupied in the Indonesian archipelago.[12] A Dutch company, South Pacific Film, was set up, and Andjar Asmara was to direct two films for them. Among those assisting Andjar was Usmar Ismail. Usmar had been working as a journalist reporting on the 'Renville Talks' being held between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republicans on an American cruiser in Jakarta Bay in late 1947 when he was arrested by Dutch authorities, who had discovered he was a major in the Indonesian National Army. Usmar played some role in the direction of two films for the South Pacific Film Company, and was also involved in their scripting, though his work was subject to control by the producers.

By the time of the final withdrawal of the Dutch colonial administration at the end of 1949, approximately 114 films had been produced in the

[12] Biran, *Sejarah Film* 1900–1950, 359.

Netherlands East Indies in the period since 1926. In contrast, in colonized India, the first indigenous feature film was produced by the Indian national, Phalke, in 1913, and by the end of the silent period alone, some 1268 features had been produced mainly by Indian people. One may ask why was the film industry in the Netherlands East Indies so slow to develop, and why were Chinese Indonesians so central to its establishment and growth, in both production and exhibition? Only partial answers can be given to these questions. One was the failure of the Javanese aristocracy, the *priyayi*, to evolve into a capitalized landowning national bourgeoisie and so create an indigenous class involved in the development of industry generally. Throughout the nineteenth century the *priyayi*, in effect, had become paid civil servants of the Dutch colonial system.[13] Political economist Richard Robison argues that this failure had its roots in the limited land rights accorded to the aristocracy in the pre-colonial period. Historian George Kahin emphasizes that Dutch trading practices and related colonial policies, particularly the allocation of trading rights to the Chinese, were such as to annihilate any indigenous middle class, particularly any indigenous middle class that could be substantially involved in trade or the establishment of industries.[14] Nevertheless, one might also note another factor, namely that those Chinese who were the most successful in developing the film industry, The Teng Chun and the Wong brothers, also had overseas industry experience and connections.

New Initiatives in the Early Independence Period

A new development in the Indonesian film industry in the early 1950s was the emergence of a small number of indigenous film companies, the most significant of these being the Perfini Company, set up by Usmar Ismail, who now worked as writer-producer-director. But also established in these years was the State Film Company (Perusahaan Film Negara—PFN), created out of a company initially established by Albert Balink in the 1930s. Its facilities had been taken over and used by the Japanese during the occu-

[13] Robison argues that in pre-colonial Java the king allocated the right to control labour and produce to the aristocracy, but not formal ownership of land. Under colonialism most *priyayi* elected to follow the same system, rejecting land in favour of salaries from the colonial government, commissions on crops and tributes. See Richard Robison, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 10–18.

[14] George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1952, 9.

pation and by the returning Dutch. PFN produced documentaries for the new Indonesian government but also a small number of features, including films by the left-wing directors Kotot Sukardi and Basuki Effendi**.** Another important company in these early years was the Persari Company, established by the West Sumatran-born producer, theatrical entrepreneur, businessman and politician, Djamaluddin Malik. Persari produced an average of five films a year between 1950 and 1956 and built its own lavish studio with a government loan. The company was bankrupted in 1957.

In addition to the first indigenous companies, some of the older Chinese producers returned to production, The Teng Chun's Java Industrial Film now taking the name Bintang Surabaya. Significant new Chinese production companies also emerged, for example Garuda Film and Golden Arrow. Indeed the majority of the production companies in the 1950s were owned by Chinese Indonesians. The Chinese Indonesians also continued to maintain dominance in cinema ownership, Ardan recording that they owned 90 % of cinemas in Indonesia in the mid 1960s.[15]

Usmar Ismail's first post-independence productions for his Perfini Company, *Darah dan Do'a* ('The Long March', 1950), *Enam Djam di Djogdja* ('Six Hours in Jogja', 1951) and the later *Lewat Djam Malam* ('After the Curfew', 1954) all commemorate the immediately preceding revolutionary years of the four-year struggle for independence, and its aftermath. These films are widely regarded as being influenced by Italian neo-realist methods, being shot on location with a mixture of non-actors and actors, their stories and dialogue partly improvised during the shoot. But as post-revolutionary productions they have an unusual scepticism, being different from the films by most of the Italian neo-realists of the 1940s. Rather they are dramas that often highlight, with a quiet understatement and considerable subtlety, the moral ambiguities produced by the revolutionary period, as seen in *Lewat Djam Malam*, where, on his return to civilian life, the central character is troubled by war crimes he has committed as a freedom fighter in rural areas. Usmar's most commercially successful film, *Krisis*, now lost, and surviving only as a script, was a comedy about the housing crisis in the early years of the republic. Indeed *Krisis* was the first locally produced film ever to be screened in the so-called 'first-class' cinemas, where it ran for over a month.[16] In 1955 Usmar

[15]Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep ke Sinepleks*, Jakarta, GPBSI, 1992, 57.

[16]Gayus Siagian, *Sejarah Film Indonesia: Masa Kelahiran-Pertumbuhan* ('A History of Indonesian Film: The Period of its Birth and Growth'), Jakarta, Fakultas Film dan Televisi, Institut Kesenian Jakarta, 2010, 88.

and his colleagues made a brilliant and prophetic satire on the dangers of charismatic political leadership in Indonesia, *Tamu Agung* ('Exalted Guest'), which was released despite its satire being directed at President Sukarno. So highly regarded in Indonesia are the early Usmar Ismail films, that 30 March, the anniversary of the first day of shooting of Usmar's first post-independence film, *Darah dan Do'a*, is celebrated as National Film Day in Indonesia. One reason for the continuing high regard in which they are still held today may be—not only the obvious quality of the films themselves—but that most of these Perfini films still survive, having been held in storage in good condition by the Perfini family company until the fortuitous establishment of Sinematek Indonesia in the mid 1970s. Films made for other, more transitory companies, with changing management, did not necessarily have this framework of continuity. Some films may have been destroyed in anti-Chinese rioting and arson following the events of 30 September 1965.

By the mid 1950s Usmar had moved away from making films about the period of struggle for independence, and, following a study tour of Hollywood funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and prompted by the limited commercial success of his own films, showed a growing concern to become more commercially viable by finding formulas for popular Indonesian genres that might develop audiences for films made by his company, as in his musical *Tiga Dara* ('The Three Sisters', 1956).

Other directors who emerged in the 1950s include a group of left-wing directors, notably Kotot Sukardi, Basuki Effendi and Bachtiar Siagian. Altogether these directors appear to have made nearly 30 films, for a variety of different companies. In 1952 Basuki Effendi made *Pulang* ('Homecoming'), about an Indonesian soldier, a member of the Japanese military organization, Heiho, returning from the war. *Pulang* won a prize at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in communist Czechoslovakia. In 1951 Kotot Sukardi made a film about poor children, entitled *Si Pintjang* ('The Lame'), and in 1955 he filmed a traditional story from Bali, *Djajaprana*, both films made for PFN. Another film by Kotot Sukardi was *Melati Dibalik Terali* ('Jasmine Behind Bars', 1961), about imprisoned women, its story based on actual events. Bachtiar Siagian, who directed his first film in 1955, made at least 11 films, but only one of them, *Violetta*, is in existence today. Based on Siagian's surviving screenplays and treatments, Krishna Sen has argued a case for the importance of his films as left-wing works. His 1956 film, *Daerah Hilang* ('Lost Land') dealt with struggles by small traders and squatters to defend their rights to land they

had occupied in an area to be incorporated into the elite Jakarta suburb of Kebayoran Baru.[17]

Only 6 of the nearly 30 films by these left-wing directors survive, most as single, incomplete 16 mm preservation prints that are in poor condition, usually with significant sprocket damage.[18] A huge project to digitize all films held by Sinematek Indonesia, organized by the newly established Indonesian Film Center, and currently under way in Jakarta, may eventually make it possible to view again films surviving only as negatives, or as single preservation prints, including films by these left-wing directors.[19]

In the 1950s Usmar's Perfini Company provided a framework for the emergence of other talented young directors, notably Central Javanese Djayakusuma—his work is discussed in Chap. 4—who was especially interested in traditional regional cultures; and East Javanese Nya Abbas Akup, a writer-director of comedies and political satires, whose comedies would be particularly popular in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1953 Djayakusuma made *Harimau Tjampa* ('Tiger from Tjampa'), a film exploring the Islamic philosophies of restraint that underlie West Sumatran *pencak silat*. The film was initially to be directed by Usmar Ismail himself, given his West Sumatran background, but when Usmar was given a scholarship to study in the USA Djayakusuma took over the project, filming numerous exterior scenes on location in Minangkabau matrilineal villages in the highlands of West Sumatra. In 1959 Djayakusuma made *Tjambuk Api* ('Whipfire'), a stirring melodrama about East Javanese villagers forming a cooperative to irrigate their land, and in doing so resisting oppression by the village head. In 1960 he made *Lahirnya Gatotkaca* ('The Birth of Gatotkaca'), a filmed version of a Javanese *wayang wong* dance drama, based on the Hindu Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata*. Nya Abbas Akup's brilliant comedy, *Tiga Buronan* ('Three Fugitives'), produced by Perfini in 1957—also discussed in Chap. 4—a story about bandits harassing the citizens of a quiet Muslim village, subliminally mixes the iconography of Hollywood Westerns with

[17]This film and other initiatives by Bachtiar Siagian are discussed in Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, London, Zed Books, 1994, 41–6.

[18]Five films by these left-wing directors are preserved at Sinematek Indonesia on 16 mm, in incomplete form. They are *Si Pintjang* and *Djajaprana* by Kotot Sukardi, and *Pulang*, *Rentjong dan Surat* and *Si Melati* by Basuki Effendi. A 35 mm incomplete copy of *Violetta* by Bachtiar Siagian was acquired by Sinematek Indonesia in the early 1990s.

[19]See the website of the Indonesian Film Center, with webpages in both Indonesian and English, http://www.indonesianfilmcenter.com/, accessed 30 May 2016.

the music and performance styles of *lenong Betawi*, a form of indigenous theatre that evolved in colonial Batavia.

Other significant writer-directors to emerge in this period were noted poet Asrul Sani, who worked as head of screenplays at Djammaluddin Malik's Persari company and wrote the screenplay for Usmar Ismail's *Lewat Djam Malam*, and Wim Umboh, a Chinese Indonesian from Manado in North Sulawesi, whose best film, *Matjan Kemajoran* ('The Tiger of Kemayoran', 1965), a romantic portrait of resistance and collaboration set on the edges of Batavia in the colonial era, was based on popular legends of the period. In the 1970s Wim Umboh was a technical innovator in the use of cinemascope and colour, and won prizes for his romantic melodramas.

Imported or Local Films: Political Economy of the Indonesian Film Industry

In the 1950s Indonesia produced an average of 35 features per year, mostly in Jakarta the national capital, and made in the national language, *Bahasa Indonesia*. The number of film production companies involved in regular production—including the Chinese companies—totalled only seven. But the number of importers was 28, and imports dominated the market. Fifty-four films were produced in Indonesia in 1950, but 863 films were imported, and this included 660 films from the USA, which did include a large backlog of films held up by the uncertain situation in Indonesia in the late 1940s.[20] In the early 1950s the distinction between first- and second-class cinemas, introduced in the colonial period, remained. Hollywood films were shown in the first-class cinemas. Indonesian films were almost always shown in second-class cinemas, but all cinema owners were under pressure from AMPAI (the American Motion Pictures Association in Indonesia) to show American films. In the second-class cinemas the Indonesian films, in turn, faced strong competition from the now increasingly popular Indian cinema, and from Filipino and Malay films, particularly from those Malay films produced by the Shaw Brothers company in Singapore, starring the popular, multi-talented singer and actor P. Ramlee, shortly to emerge as a brilliant, writer-director of his own films. Some 30 Malay-language films were imported into Indonesia

[20] Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep ke Sinepleks*, 37.

in 1952. S.M. Ardan suggests that it was the popular Indian films and the new Malay-language films that were regarded by the Indonesian filmmakers as the real enemy of the local product, for, in their view, the Indonesian films had no hope of competing with the Hollywood films.

In 1954 an Indonesian Film Producers' Association was formed. In early April 1955 the first Indonesian Film Festival was held, celebrating Indonesian films, and this was followed by a three-day congress of cinema owners, organized with the aim of providing some united resistance to the power of film importers. In March 1957 the Indonesian Film Producers' Association organized the closure of studios for over a month in protest at the position of the Indonesian film industry, and demanded that the government protect the nation's film industry by placing a quota on imports and requiring a minimum screening time for Indonesian films.[21] One consequence of this industrial action was the crisis it created for Djamaluddin Malik's Persari Company. The Persari Company, burdened with the obligation to repay a government loan provided to build its studio, never recovered from the strike of 1957, and closed later that year.[22] While Indonesia produced an average of 35 films a year in the 1950s, the majority of these films were made in the first five years of the decade. The number of Indonesian films produced began to fall steadily, from 65 in 1955 to 16 in 1959. Although production increased in the early 1960s, overall the turbulent period of Guided Democracy (1959–65) saw a decline in local production, with only 20 and 15 films produced in 1964 and 1965.[23]

The Guided Democracy Period: Conflict between Left and Right Cultural Organizations

In the 1960s, during the Guided Democracy period, with the mobilization of society under Sukarno's policy of *Nasakom*—an alliance between nationalism, religion (agama) and communism—and the confrontation with Malaysia, the left-wing cultural organization, *Lekra* (Institute for People's Culture), achieved ascendancy in the world of the arts. This was a period of heightened cultural politics, a period when even former friends

[21] Ibid., 31.
[22] Ibid., 49.
[23] Ibid., 48–9.

and associates from the early 1950s were polarized in their positions, as the Indonesian Communist Party became increasingly committed to forms of direct action to produce a restructuring of the society. The communist cultural organizations regarded American imperialism as the main cultural enemy. In March 1964, the 'Committee to Boycott Imperialist American Films' (known by the acronym PAPFIAS) received government support for a ban on the import of American films, and on the import of films from American allied countries. This ban was implemented throughout Indonesia the following August, resulting in the screening only of Indonesian films and films from communist countries.[24] The ban was widely supported by workers in the film production industry, who felt particularly threatened by the competition from American films, a cultural nationalism fanned as well by American support for regional rebellions in 1958. A variety of views are held about the impact of this ban. The ban was ended after the national crisis of 30 September 1965, and seen by many as just another communist plot. Krishna Sen has argued, however, that the ban was a significant and long-lasting challenge to AMPAI.[25] Indeed the Suharto government itself in 1972 would impose quotas on film imports, including on films from the USA. However, S.M. Ardan reports that one calamitous consequence of the ban on imports in 1964 was the loss of audiences for cinemas, the number of cinemas declining from 890 in 1960 to 350 in 1966.

Nevertheless, this decline had begun before the ban, and the drop in attendance was also caused by the curfews that accompanied the hunt for communists, and the wide net of repression initiated by General Suharto after 30 September 1965. Among those left-wing filmmakers arrested in the purge of communists that followed were Bachtiar Siagian and Basuki Effendi, who remained imprisoned for a decade or more and were never able to resume their careers.

Film Policies in the New Order Period

New Order policies lifted restrictions on American imports. In 1966, as a result of the threats to the survival of cinemas, a special '*kran*' or 'emergency hydrant' for the import of films was permitted by the govern-

[24] Salim Said, *Shadows on the Silver Screen: A Social History of Indonesian Film*, Jakarta, Lontar Foundation, 1991, 69–73.

[25] Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, 35.

ment, and 377 films were imported in 1966 and 499 in 1967. Meanwhile national production over the period 1965 to 1969 dropped from 15 to 9 films. The government came to accept the need to support the local film production industry.[26] In 1967 a scheme for subsidizing national film production, based on funds raised by taxing imported films, was proposed. Initially people from the arts were appointed to run the film division of the Indonesian Department of Information, the ministry charged since 1964 with overseeing film matters. A graduate of the State Film School in Moscow, scriptwriter and soon-to-be leading film director Sjuman Djaya was appointed as Director of Film Development and Guidance. One of the first initiatives in 1968 was to set up a National Film Production Council, which then oversaw the development of four prestige film productions. Scripts for all films going into production were eligible to compete for funding from the council. Only four films were produced before the council was abolished, one of them a satirical comedy, *Matt Dower* (1969), in fact a subversive political allegory about the recent power struggle between General Suharto and President Sukarno, which, it was decided, after being previewed by top officials of the Department, had to be suppressed. Another unforeseen, less fortunate consequence of the establishment of the National Film Production Council was that for much of the New Order period films were subject to pre-censorship—they were censored at the script stage as well as on completion. Even after the National Film Production Council was abolished, the requirement to submit scripts to the Department of Information prior to production was retained.

Nevertheless, for a time censorship even of Indonesian films was relaxed, for the main priority of the government was the emergence of a highly commercial local film production industry, and this began to take off in the early 1970s. In these early years, some of the most successful films had sensational titles, for example *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* ('Breathing in the Mud'), *Beranak Dalam Kubur* ('Giving Birth in a Tomb'). In 1969 only eight films were made. But in 1971 more than 50 films went into production. Indonesian films were now for the first time being made in colour and cinemascope, so in technical terms they could begin to compete with Hollywood and films from Hong and India. As the industry grew more financially secure, censorship was tightened. The request for quotas on

[26] Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep ke Sinepleks*, 57.

imports, put to the Suharto government as early as 1967, did result by 1972 in a quota on imports of foreign films.[27]

Because many newcomers entered the industry at that time, most without any real training, concern at industry standards led to plans to include a Faculty of Cinematography in the soon to be opened Jakarta Institute of the Arts, to be located in the Jakarta cultural centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki. Moscow-trained Sjuman Djaya, who had stepped down from his role in the Department of Information, became the first Dean of this Faculty. The Jakarta Institute of the Arts and the archive for feature films, Sinematek Indonesia, were both established in the early to mid 1970s, by the Jakarta City Council, as a personal initiative of the dynamic governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin.

This growth was not without its problems. Throughout the early 1970s, even though a subsidy derived from the tax on imported films facilitated the growth of local production, there was a perennial conflict between film producers and distributors, particularly cinema owners, who were often unwilling to screen Indonesian films. An effort to resolve this was made in 1975, when the Minister for Information decreed that all cinemas had to screen at least two Indonesian films each month, for two days. Earlier, in 1974, the Minister had agreed to reduce the number of imported films by 100 films over each subsequent year. At the same time importers were advantaged when the government organized them into four consortia, each responsible for a different import sector (for example from Europe and America or from Asia). Divisive and costly competition was thus reduced, for the number of Indonesian importers negotiating with outside interests had been reduced. However, over the next decade this ultimately led to a powerful monopoly on imports by Suptan films, owned by President Suharto's foster-brother, Sudwikatmono, another of whose companies, Subentra, began in the mid 1980s to develop the Sinepleks 21 chain of multiplex cinemas.[28]

In the 1970s and 1980s Indonesian film production would average about 60–70 features per year, the largest number of films made in one year being 120 in 1977. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Malay-language cinema in Singapore had gone into decline. It was now Indonesian films that were filling the gap left by the decrease in Malay-language films in the Singapore and Malaysian market, a reversal of the situation that pertained in the 1950s.

[27] Quotas introduced in 1972 were Mandarin (Chinese and Taiwanese films) 100 films, European 200 films, American 150, others 50, thus allowing an overall total of a maximum of 600 imported titles. See Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep Ke Sinepleks*, 58.

[28] Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, 56–65.

New Emerging Writer-Directors in the 1970s

Sjuman Djaya (Fig. 3.4), who, on his return from Moscow, in his creative work had confined himself to writing scripts for others, in 1971 directed his first feature film, *Lewat Tengah Malam* ('After Midnight'), a contemporary Robin Hood story which highlighted corruption and malaise in the society. This emphasis on social issues remained a defining feature of his career. His comedy, *Si Mamad*, about a timid Muslim clerk, who sells stationery from his archive to support his large family, only to discover that the head of the archive is involved in much larger scale fraud, won the prize for the best feature at the 1974 Indonesian Film Festival. *Kerikil Kerikil Tajam* ('Sharp Gravel', 1984), dramatizes the hazards for village women journeying to the big city. *Yang Muda, Yang Bercinta* ('Young, in Love', 1977), a film about student protesters, made at a time of student criticism of New Order policies, and starring the oft-banned poet Rendra, who read poems in the film, was heavily censored prior to release and then banned. But Sjuman Djaya's work ranged very widely: from literary adaptations, for example the dynamic *Atheis* (1974), set in the second quarter of the twentieth century and about the difficulties of reconciling Islam and Marxism; to history, for example *Raden Ajeng Kartini*, a 1982 film biography of the women's emancipationist (1879–1904), based on her letters and emphasizing the refined but repressive (for women) culture of the Javanese aristocracy; to sophisticated Sirkian-style melodrama such as *Kabut Sutra Ungu* ('Mist of Purple Silk', 1979), which was very successful at the box office. His joyful early film, *Si Doel Anak Betawi* ('Si Doel, Child of Betawi', 1973), which is partly a musical, celebrated the popular culture of the Betawi poor and their children (Fig. 3.5). Concepts in this film formed the starting point for the longest running television series of the 1990s, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* ('Educated Doel'), initiated nearly a decade after Sjuman's early death in 1985.

An equally important new talent was Teguh Karya, a young Chinese Indonesian theatre director who had studied with the Akademi Teater Nasional Indonesia and then at the East West Centre in Hawaii. Teguh developed a company of actors—indeed a collective—known as Teater Populer, which began by staging plays in the auditorium at the Hotel Indonesia. His first film, *Wajah Seorang Laki-Laki* ('Face of a Man', 1970), a psychological drama about an alienated young man in conflict with his violent father, was set in a Portuguese community in Batavia in the late eighteenth century. This brilliantly realized period film included scenes

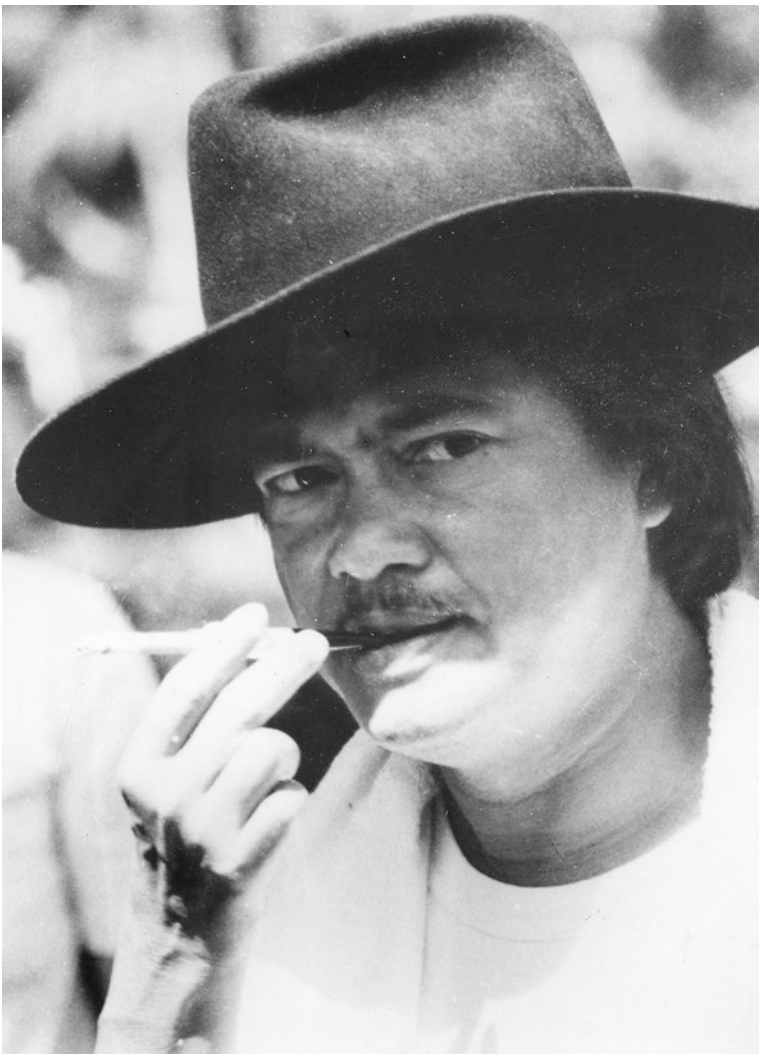

Fig. 3.4 The charismatic Sjuman Djaya (1934–85), an important innovator in Indonesian film in the 1970s and early 1980s (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 3.5 Poster for Sjuman Djaya's 1973 film *Si Doel Anak Betawi* ('Si Doel, Child of Betawi'), a film that introduced a key figure in Indonesian popular culture, taken up again in the longest running television series of the 1990s, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* ('Educated Doel') (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 3.6 Leading film director of the 1970s and 1980s, Teguh Karya (left, signalling), together with members of his Teater Populer collective, celebrating their wins at the Indonesian Film Festival 1985. In the centre is actress Christine Hakim, and far right is actor Alex Komang (Photo by David Hanan)

reconstructing early popular culture in Batavia. However, it failed at the box office. Teguh did not attempt to make a film for the next two years, but spent his time studying what constitutes 'popular cinema'. For the following six years Teguh mainly wrote and directed superior popular romantic melodramas—which supported his company of actors and helped develop his technicians—the best of which, for example *Ranjang Pengantin* ('The Marriage Bed', 1975), showed a diversity of aspects of struggling, lower middle-class Jakarta society and approached with serious concern the numerous problems faced by its citizens, whether economic privation, or prejudice mired in outmoded attitudes, or simply uncaring sexism. The Teater Populer collective was an important training ground for much new talent in the Indonesian cinema. It was from Teguh's Teater Populer collective that director Slamet Rahardjo and multi-award-winning actress and, later, producer, Christine Hakim, emerged (Fig. 3.6). In 1979 Teguh completed his great historical film, *November 1828*. Set in the Java War (1825–30), its story of an Indo-Dutch platoon occupying a small village in Central Java not only dramatizes popular resistance to Dutch colonialism but also provides a cultural contrast between Javanese and Western values.

November 1828 was the first Indonesian film to become widely known in Europe, being screened at the London and Berlin Film Festivals.

Popular Indonesian Genres in the New Order Period

Indonesian popular cinema has evolved several distinctive film genres, often based around particular stars. These genres are relatively unique in that they are not found in any other society in quite the same way.

In the mid 1970s one of the most popular stars was the Betawi singer and comedian, Benyamin S, who starred in more than 40 films in less than ten years. The Betawi are the ethnic group regarded as the original inhabitants of Jakarta, and have their own dialect. Benyamin's songs drew on an earlier Betawi musical form, *gambang kromong*, and their humorous lyrics, using Betawi idioms, encapsulated vignettes of life among the Betawi poor. In a string of B-movies made very cheaply Benyamin S developed what really amounted to a critique of modernization in Jakarta. Sometimes these films critique the new international business world emerging in Jakarta in the 1970s (with its numerous shady land deals), basing the critique on the loss of Betawi community and Betawi values of reciprocity; sometimes they spoof icons of Western popular culture on the basis of Betawi values and common sense.

Another emerging genre was the *dangdut* musical. Dangdut is a highly rhythmic Indonesian popular music, which exploded as a mass culture phenomenon in the Indonesia of the 1970s, particularly among working-class youth. It has some similarities with rock, but is highly melodious, and has a long line of evolution through Melayu *keroncong* music, subtly mixed with elements of Arabian and Indian music. The singer who first used the term *dangdut*, and effected the transition from *Orkes Melayu* into full blown *dangdut*, was Rhoma Irama, who starred in at least 26 *dangdut* musical films between 1976 and 2011, becoming one of the most popular screen stars ever in Indonesia. In his 1976 film *Darah Muda* ('Young Blood'), Rhoma claimed that in *dangdut* he was deliberately setting out to create 'a music of the East'. After his first visit to Mecca, in 1975, despite the obvious similarities between *dangdut* and music in a Bollywood film, Rhoma consciously gave his music a stronger Islamic dimension, his films began to use Muslim imagery (he and his Soneta group often wearing white Arabian costumes in the songs), and the music becoming known as

dakwah music, music with a conscious Islamic message.[29] In the late 1970s Rhoma was banned from state television for nearly ten years, because his alliance with the Islamic party, the United Development Party, made him a political figure at a time of increasing dissatisfaction, in Islamic circles, with the New Order government. But his films were not banned and did very well at the box office. The dramas played out in these films are often rudimentary, but the power of their music made them extremely popular, particularly among the poor. By the 1990s the plebeian *dangdut* had become nationally popular even among the elites, and it was almost obligatory for politicians to be accompanied by *dangdut* musicians at election rallies. Rhoma himself—described in some newspaper reports as a 'jumping flea'—in 1997 became a campaigner for Suharto's Golkar party.

A third genre is the 'Queen of the Southern Ocean' genre, based on legends about Nyi Roro Kidul, the chthonic queen exiled to the bottom of the ocean, and her daughter, Nyi Blorong, who has the power to prey on the living, sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. As noted in the previous chapter, Nyi Roro Kidul can be linked to the ambiguous Hindu mother goddess Durga, and even to pre-Hindu myths in the Indonesian archipelago. One scholar lists 21 films made in this genre between 1979 and 2003.[30] This genre includes the Indonesian 'Crocodile Queen' and 'White Snake' horror films, and all are Indonesian variants of the 'monstrous-feminine' or the ambiguous or negative mother image.[31] Clearly there are influences from the Indian cinema in these films, but perhaps it is not only the strength of pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist mythology in the popular imagination that makes these films and their legendary queen popular fare, but also pervasive matriarchal elements in Javanese society. Despite token opposing Islamic elements in the films, Nyi Roro Kidul and her daughter are the major objects of fascination for the viewer.

The last two cited Indonesian film genres exemplify, first, the way in which at times Islam becomes really central to Indonesian popular culture

[29] For a discussion of Rhoma Irama and his songs, see William Frederick, 'Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style: Aspects of Indonesian Popular Culture', *Indonesia* 34, 1982, 102–30. For a discussion of the *dangdut* phenomenon as a whole, see Andrew N. Weintraub, *Dangdut Stories: A Social and Musical History of Indonesia's Most Popular Music*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010.

[30] Robert Wessing, 'Dislodged Tales: Javanese Goddesses and Spirits on the Silver Screen', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 163, 4, 2007, 529–55.

[31] For an exploration of this phenomenon and its occurrence in film, see Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, London, Routledge, 1993.

and, second, the continuing interest in Hindu-Buddhist legends. There are also a number of popular films dealing with the coming of Islam to Indonesia, and particularly about the early Javanese Muslim saints, who spread Islam in fifteenth-century Java, for example, *Sunan Kalijaga* (the second most popular film released in Jakarta in 1983) and the later *Sembilan Wali* ('Nine Saints', 1985). Such films are seen by some *santri* (orthodox or modernist) Muslims to be an embarrassment to Islam due to their extensive portrayal of these pioneering saints performing magic, although in fact these films are loosely based on legends recorded in the series of writings known as the *Babad Tanah Jawi* ('Chronicles of the Land of Java').[32]

There are of course numerous other popular Indonesian genres that reached their height in the commercial Indonesian cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, among them the Indonesian martial arts genre ('*silat*' films), the teenage romances ('*remaja*' films) and the stories from the colonial period. Extremely popular in the 1980s was a Westernized group, known as 'Warung Coffee', specializing in slapstick humour and jokes in Jakarta dialect.

Initiatives of the 1980s

In the later 1970s and in the 1980s the now-established younger generation and others were beginning to make films that were not quite so commercial in orientation. Sjuman Djaya had pioneered this trend with ambitious, expensive projects such as *Atheis*, in 1974, and followed up with *Raden Ajeng Kartini* in 1982. Asrul Sani found funding to make *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* ('Pioneers of Freedom') on location in West Sumatra, a film about a woman's encounter with sympathetic Islamic reformers, as she seeks to address the problem of domestic abuse. After the success of *November 1828*, Teguh Karya moved more firmly away from his earlier commercial approach, making films that depicted aspects of contemporary Jakarta in a way that was both realistic in its themes and milieus, and varied in their stylistic approaches. These film include *Usia 18* ('The Age of 18') a drama about a teenager confronting the death of a parent; *Dibalik Kelambu* ('Behind the Mosquito Net'), a naturalistic drama

[32] *Babad Tanah Jawi* is a term referring to a series of surviving manuscripts in the Javanese language—the earliest stemming from the eighteenth century—that recapitulate and rework legends of the coming of Islam to Indonesia in the fourteenth century.

about problems faced by a married couple; and *Ibunda*, about an ageing mother's relation to all her children, including a teenage daughter in a relationship with a young Papuan student in Jakarta. From 1978 onwards, key supporters of Teguh's Teater Populer were the Chinese-owned companies, PT Interstudio and PT Garuda Film, and particularly Interstudio's Njoo Han Siang, who produced the expensive *November 1828* and shortly afterwards the experimental narrative, exploring the 'Third World' aspects of the Indonesian experience, *Rembulan dan Matahari* ('Moon and Sun'), written and directed by Teguh's associate, actor Slamet Rahardjo. Njoo Han Siang also provided much of the funding for Teguh's most original film, *Secangkir Kopi Pahit* ('Bitter Coffee', 1985), which explores the drift to the cities in the Third World, but tells its harrowing story of migration to Jakarta in a complex series of flashbacks and flash-forwards. Eros Djarot, a musician and later an innovative journalist and politician—and, in fact, a brother of Slamet Rahardjo—wrote and directed the poetic *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988), starring Christine Hakim as the guerrilla leader resisting the Dutch in the mountains of the strongly Islamic area of Aceh in the early part of the twentieth century. *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* became the first Indonesian film to be invited for screening at the Cannes Film Festival.

On the negative side in this period were the series of government-financed propaganda films, directed by Arifin C. Noer, made to boost President Suharto's image as a national hero during the independence period, and to amplify the fear of communism by exaggerating the extent of grassroots support in 1965 for a violent communist takeover of society. These films were produced by the State Film Production Centre (PPFN), the executive producer being its head, G. Dwipayana, a former military man, a member of Suharto's 'kitchen cabinet' and subsequently author of a number of books on Suharto. The first of these films, *Serangan Fajar* ('Dawn Attack', 1981), presented an inflated view of Suharto's role as a partisan during the period of struggle for independence. The second, the grotesque four-and-a-half-hour *Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI* ('The Treason of the Indonesian Communist Party in the 30th September Movement', 1984), based on writings by the regime's official historian of the period, Nugroho Notosusanto, provided a distorted and inflammatory view of the role of the Communist Party in the abortive coup of 1965, at every point assuming that the murder of the six generals had the involvement and support of all members of the PKI, rather than being the secret initiative of a few, together with some members of the military. This film became almost obligatory viewing

for Indonesians, being shown not only in cinemas but also for special audiences of school children, and on television on 30 September every year during the remaining 14 years of the New Order. It became one of the main planks by which the regime propagated the official view of the events of 30 September and maintained an atmosphere of state terror around the issue of the continuing 'threat of communism', even though the state had itself annihilated the left, by coordinating the murder of at least 500,000 communists in the post-30 September 1965 round-up.[33] The least known of these official 'history' films, directed by Arifin C. Noer, *Djakarta 1966* (1988), was designed to celebrate the alliance between demonstrating students and the army under Suharto during the period of the destabilization of Sukarno, which resulted on 11 March 1966 in the transfer of authority—to take measures to 'restore order'—to General Suharto (Fig. 3.7). The film's credits give 1988 as the year of the film's completion, but it was not widely released, and is rarely mentioned in histories of Indonesian cinema. It is possible that, because the events surrounding the destabilization of Sukarno's rule depicted in *Djakarta 1966* could provide a model for the destabilization of Suharto himself, the Suharto government came to realize that this propaganda film could prove dangerous to the very government that produced it, so its wide distribution was not encouraged. In fact student demonstrations nationwide eventually played a crucial role in the fall of Suharto in 1998.

The main films critical of the New Order in the 1970s had been written and directed by Sjuman Djaya. Further films critical of the New Order appeared in the late 1980s. Ultimately the most controversial film, though not widely seen at the time, was *Langitku Rumahku* ('My Sky, My Home', 1990), produced by the Ekapraya Group (Eros Djarot and Slamet Rahardjo). A film shot only a year or so later by the Ekapraya Group, *Kantata Takwa* ('Cantata of Devotion') an experimental-political-music-documentary, centres on a huge pop protest concert held in central Jakarta in June 1990.

[33] Heryanto has carried out a survey of the role the film *Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI* played in people's knowledge of these events in Indonesia from 1985 onwards. See Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in New Order Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, New York, Routledge, 2006, 50–1.

Fig. 3.7 Poster for Arifin C. Noer's government-funded feature film, *Djakarta 1966* (1988), about the alliance between students and General Suharto in the destabilization of President Sukarno in the early months of 1966 (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Changes in Film Exhibition in the 1980s and the Decline of Local Production in the 1990s

In the 1980s about 180 films were imported into Indonesia each year, and statistics show that over this period on average 35–40 % of viewers watched Indonesian films, 20–25 % watched American films, with films from Hong Kong and India gaining 15 % and 12 % of the audience respectively.[34] However, because distributors screened the American films in the expensive urban cinemas, where prices were almost equivalent to the West, the real profits were made on American films. That this sector was especially lucrative is seen in the establishment of a new chain of cinemas, originally known as the Sinepleks 21 chain of multiplexes (now known as 'Cinema 21'), developed by Suharto's foster-brother and cousin, Sudwikatmono. The Sinepleks 21 chain commenced operation in central Jakarta in 1986 and expanded its operations in major cities throughout Indonesia in subsequent years. While the development of the Sinepleks 21 network may be seen as part of an inevitable process of modernization, one in which, incidentally, a *pribumi* investor, already the most powerful importer of films, could come to dominate in an area until then dominated by the Chinese cinema owners, two points need noting. The Sinepleks 21 chain preferred to show primarily foreign films, especially films from Hong Kong and the USA; and it was effectively a part of the business empire of the extended family of the president.

The end of the 1980s saw a sudden and serious decline in national film production due to a number of related factors. First, there was the introduction and rapid expansion of commercial television (this began in 1988) and the rapid profits that could be made by investing in television rather than in film. Second, there was the fact that the monopoly group that controlled the profitable cinemas favoured Hollywood or Hong Kong films and were reluctant to screen Indonesian films—and the consequences of this for distribution elsewhere in Indonesia, where mass buying of product became obligatory, in order to facilitate economies of scale. A probing account of what was going on here has been given by Misbach Biran:

> Foreign films are imported into Indonesia by a number of companies given official permission to do so according to government regulations, but the

[34] Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep Ke Sinepleks*, 117.

> reality is dominated by one hand that has a close connection with the prevailing power. Because there is really a monopoly controlling the importation of films, the bargaining position of the monopoly in relation to the regional distributors (or their brokers) is one of great advantage: there is not really any competition from alternative suppliers of imported films. So the distributors are forced to buy imported films at a high price, and if not, they will only get a small proportion of films. In consequence, in order to reduce costs by mass buying of product, the brokers must attempt to get rights to as many imported films as possible, and they also need to place them in cinemas. A consequence of this, in turn, is that they turn a cold shoulder to the national product. And furthermore, the regional distributors, and their brokers, can put pressure on the prices paid for Indonesian films, forcing these prices down. Indonesian producers in turn are not able to oppose this, because the regional distributors and brokers have increasingly under the New Order government also proved able to turn themselves into a monopoly group, with the blessing of the dominant power in the state.
>
> The position of imported films in the society grew strong again through the growing power of the cinema chain 'Sinepleks 21' throughout all of Indonesia. Group '21' is controlled by the same hand that dominated film imports …[35]

'The hidden hand' that dominated film imports and so controlled distribution, and that also owned the newer, much better equipped Group 21 Sinepleks chain of cinemas throughout Indonesia, as well as television stations, was Sudwikatmono. Misbach Biran's careful formulation of the multi-factorial nature of the problems for distributing Indonesian films in Indonesia, relates all these factors back to one source.

In the 1990s the number of films made dropped, from 90 films produced in 1990 to only three in 1999. Most films that were made and screened commercially were funded by small groups of cinema owners keen to have national product, but these films had to be made very cheaply, and were mostly sensational horror films or quasi-pornographic films, or both. Filmmakers found employment in the rapidly expanding television industry.

But the 1990s also saw the emergence of a key figure in contemporary Indonesian cinema, Garin Nugroho. His first film, *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti* ('Love on a Slice of Bread', 1991) was a road movie—filmed in a

[35] H. Misbach Yusa Biran, 'The History of Indonesian Cinema at a Glance', trans. David Hanan, in David Hanan, ed., *Film in South East Asia: Views from the Region*, Hanoi, SEAPAVAA and Vietnam Film Institute, 2001, 243.

freewheeling French New Wave style—about an ambivalent couple travelling across Java. This was something quite new for Indonesia. Since then Garin Nugroho has made numerous internationally acclaimed features, many in regional areas. Most of his films radically highlight major divisive issues in Indonesian society, whether indirectly, via allegory, during the Suharto period, or more openly, in the post-Suharto *Reformasi* period. These issues include the neglect of regions, as in *Surat Untuk Bidadari* ('Letter for a Wood Nymph', 1993), the overarching power of Javanese feudal traditions, explored in *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (1995, English title *And the Moon Dances*) and the many dimensions of marginalization in Indonesia, whether due to poverty or discrimination, as seen in the feature about street kids in Jogjakarta, *Daun Di Atas Bantal* ('Leaf on a Pillow', 1998).

The 1990s also saw the emergence of a younger generation of filmmakers, notably the writer-producer, Mira Lesmana, and the young writer-directors Riri Riza, Nan Achnas and Rizal Mantovani. While Lesmana and Riza, who would later form the company Miles Films, initially made children's TV films in regional areas, the work of all four of these new filmmakers coalesced into an omnibus film, *Kuldesak* (1998) with four separate stories about older teenagers—rather confronting in both story and style—written and directed by each of the above-mentioned four filmmakers. *Kuldesak* mixed avant-garde elements with popular culture, and was unexpectedly commercially successful, speaking to a new generation of young people and developing a cult following as a result.[36]

The Post-Suharto *Reformasi* Period

The *Reformasi* period is distinctive in the unprecedented growth in production of successful feature films produced and directed by women, as seen initially in *Pasir Berbisik* ('Whispering Sands', 2001) (producer Christine Hakim, director Nan Achnas), and in the charming, subtly educative and culturally specific teen movie, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* ('What's Up with Love?', 2002), directed by Rudi Soedjarwo, but workshopped, produced and co-written by Mira Lesmana with her colleagues in her company Miles Films. While there were women directing feature films in Indonesia dur-

[36]For a discussion of *Kuldesak*, see Marshall Clark, *Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia*, Caulfield, Monash University Press, 2010, 75–87.

ing the New Order period, most commentators agree that their films were virtually indistinguishable from films directed by their male colleagues. The new generation of women directors is conscious of themselves as women and of women's issues. In the early 2000s Nia Dinata directed three very innovative films, each treating quite different topics. *Ca Bau Kan* ('The Courtesan', 2001) was one of the first Indonesian films in 50 years to attempt to represent the Chinese community in Indonesia and its history in the twentieth century. *Arisan* (2003) opens up the issue of homosexual relations pursued by men masquerading as heterosexual. *Berbagi Suami* ('Sharing Husbands', 2006) gently and satirically explores the limitations of polygamous marriages. Additionally, there have been significant low-budget features made by women working in the independent sector, notably by short story writer Djenar Maesa Ayu, whose films address issues of child abuse, the need for psychological individuation, and treachery in relationships.

Another key development in the *Reformasi* era was the making for the first time of explicit (not allegorical) political documentaries, initially in Aryo Danusiri's *The Village Goat Takes the Beating* (1999), which reports on murder and torture perpetrated by the Indonesian military during the 1990s, when the government was attempting to suppress the Acehnese independence movement by force. Danusiri continued with other innovative films, most notably *Lukas' Moment* (2007). This, the first 'observational documentary' ever made in Indonesia, explores the efforts of a young West Papuan student, working with other students from his tribe, to develop a trading venture in prawn fishing, an industry which has been dominated in West Papua by Bugis transmigrants from Sulawesi.

Marking a shift in the political climate was the production in 1999 of the first feature film to critically address the massacres of communists perpetrated in 1965, Garin Nugroho's *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* ('Poetry Cannot Be Buried'), set in a prison in the highlands of Aceh in the mid 1960s, with its characters alleged communists waiting to have their names called out as the next to be executed. Of particular importance also are Nugroho's two films about West Papua. The first, *Aikon Sebuah Peta Budaya* ('Icon a Cultural Map', 2002), is a documentary/essay-film about the historic May–June 2000 West Papua Congress, where West Papuans sought to re-express their culture, and called for independence from Indonesia. The second is a feature, *Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja* (2002) (English title: *Bird-Man Tale*), that within the framework of a story of a West Papuan adolescent boy's obsession with a weeping,

lighter-skinned Indonesian woman, traces the repression of West Papua that commenced after the 2000 Congress, and has continued since then. The versatile Nugroho's most acclaimed film internationally has been the musical film *Opera Jawa* (2006), adapting to a modern village context the story of the abduction of Sita, from the Hindu epic, *The Ramayana*.

In general the most popular staple genre in the post-Suharto years has been the horror genre, and many horror films were made very cheaply but did good box office. However, in 2008 *Laskar Pelangi* ('Rainbow Troops'), directed by Riri Riza, became the most popular film ever released in Indonesia—it was seen by 4.5 million people. Set in a poor Islamic junior school on an island off the coast of Sumatra, the film celebrates the ingenuity and camaraderie of the students, speaking eloquently as it does to the numerous marginalized rural and semi-rural young people in this increasingly competitive society.

From about 2008 new kinds of films about Islam have emerged, that present Islam as an attractive fashionable modern lifestyle, and are quite different from the mystic/legend films of the 1980s about the coming of Islam to Java in the fourteenth century. In 2008 one of the most popular films of the year was *Ayat Ayat Cinta* ('Verses of Love'), directed by Hanung Bramantyo, a story about an idealistic young Indonesian Muslim man studying in Cairo and the complexity of his relationships to various women, who idealize him or become obsessed with him. This commercially successful film, with a rather melodramatic story (in Cairo he is mistakenly arrested for rape), finds its Islamic ethos not so much in the exploration of Islamic spirituality or communities, but in global connections to a wider network of Islamic societies. A similar film, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* ('When Love Glorifies the Lord') did well at the box office in 2009. The success of both films might be linked to what historian Merle Ricklefs has described as the increasing Islamisation of Java that has occurred over the last 25 years.[37] Subsequently Bramantyo has made well-crafted films dealing with the difficult position of women in male-dominated *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and about the history of the progressive Islamic movement Muhammadiyah, that has pioneered education, and community support for the poor from the early twentieth century onwards. In 2013 Bramantyo completed a film about Sukarno's

[37] M.C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its Opponents in Java, c. 1930 to the Present*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2012.

early life, culminating in Sukarno's declaration of independence in August 1945. More accomplished and more complex was Garin Nugroho's 2015 epic *Guru Bangsa Tjokroaminoto* ('Tjokroaminoto—Teacher of Our People') about H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, a leader of the nationalist Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union) in Surabaya in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Tjokroaminoto was a mentor to Sukarno and to other young people who would play political roles later in the century.

As one might expect, apart from the women's films, it is the independent sector that is the cutting edge in Indonesian cinema, challenging political repression in the society. One recent example is Rahung Nasution's poetic documentary, *Pulau Buru—Tanah Air Beta* ('Buru Island—"My Home"', 2016), which follows the journey of two ageing former political prisoners, back to an island in Eastern Indonesia, which was the notorious place of imprisonment and exile of 12,000 alleged communists of Category B ('rank and file but less directly involved in the coup') from 1967 to 1979. In April and May 2016 attempted public screenings of this film in both Jakarta and Jogjakarta have been cancelled or shut down by local authorities, and the matter is still unresolved as I write.

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CHAPTER 4

Regions and Regional Societies and Cultures in the Indonesian Cinema

> The framing of cultural specificities, as in the assertion of regional cultures, or deriving from specific traditions of worship, may sidestep and even contest a national framing of cultural heritages.
>
> Ravi Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, 31.

This chapter examines efforts by Indonesian filmmakers—beginning with films made in the early independence period—to engage with regions in Indonesia, and, to varying degrees, their different societies and cultures. One important way of identifying what we mean by a regional society is a society that exists and conceives of itself as existing at a sub-national level. In the Indonesian archipelago, most of these societies stem from pre-national times and, furthermore, many existed in pre-colonial times, as pre-state societies, often with their own different languages. Nevertheless, all these societies have been subject to change. Most of the films about regional societies discussed within the chapter have been made by Jakarta-based filmmakers with an interest—or, in a few cases, even some connection with—a regional area, and have involved substantial location shooting in the particular regional society. But the filmmakers have also filmed interior scenes in Jakarta studios, using ethnic populations living in Jakarta as extras. Nevertheless, quite a few use actors from the film industry in Jakarta to play major regional protagonists, so to a certain extent all are hybrid films, even as their relatively unique achievement is some attempt at

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D. Hanan, *Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film*,
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the representation of a regional society. These films are of varying genres and kinds. Quite a few are historical films; some are set more or less in the contemporary Indonesia of the time the films were made. The writers and directors of these films see it as important to emphasize aspects of the (traditional) regional cultures of the societies in which their films are set, for the discourse of cultures associated with regions is a strong discourse in Indonesia.

In the course of this chapter I will examine six films about regional societies and their cultures. These films engage not simply with different regions but with different historical periods. Each film takes a substantially different approach to the regional society and culture it explores; indeed, it might be suggested that each film even conceptualizes region in a different way and at different levels. Given that many regional societies in Indonesia to varying degrees claim to have a different social formation and a different culture, this chapter will begin with a discussion of what is meant, in the simplest sense, by 'the social' and its relation to culture. Importantly, despite the national motto of Indonesia being 'Unity in Diversity', this chapter does not attempt to produce too much unity in its discussion. Rather, the sections on each particular film should be seen as relatively distinct and separate, exploring issues as they are posed by each film.

The first film discussed, Djayakusuma's *Harimau Tjampa* ('The Tiger from Tjampa', 1953), is set in West Sumatra, in the matrilineal society of the highland Minangkabau, and attempts to make its portrait of a 'traditional' society as regionally specific and culturally authentic as possible. The second film discussed, *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* ('Pioneers of Freedom', 1977), also set in West Sumatra, is an historical film dealing with intellectual, political and religious movements in Minangkabau society in the 1920s. If this film is set within a 'traditional' society with a long-established culture, it is primarily addressing issues of the rights of women, and of anti-colonialism and decolonization, issues of importance to those concerned with modernization and change, rather than presenting a view of the traditional culture. Moreover, as we see in the third example, the quest for authenticity that we see in *Harimau Tjampa* is not always prioritized. This third film, *Tjambuk Api* ('Whipfire', 1958), also by Djayakusuma, while ostensibly set in East Java, deliberately combines a range of aspects of different regional cultures into one film, in accordance with the motto of the newly formed nation, 'Unity

in Diversity'. Here we are confronted with an impulse to use aspects of the regions, by a process of syncretic amalgamation, to express fundamental concepts to be associated with the newly emerging society of the nation. *Tjambuk Api* is as much a discourse about the developing nation as it is about regions. The fourth film discussed, *Tiga Buronan* ('Three Fugitives', 1957), incorporates aspects of performance forms of the Betawi people (regarded as the original inhabitants of Jakarta) as a way of telling its story, but at the same time uses these forms to gently mock some of the conventions of Hollywood, thus expressing cultural resistance. Here we should also note that the national capital, Jakarta—or rather a social group within Jakarta—is treated as a regional culture. Another historical film discussed, the poetic *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988), attempts to find ways of expressing regional cultural identity in a film that is primarily about an anti-colonial war. The film is not only about resistance to the Dutch, but about the culture that is resisting the Dutch. The final film discussed, *Surat Untuk Bidadari* (literally 'Letter for a Wood Nymph'), completed in 1993 and set in a partially surviving megalithic society on the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia, sees this pre-Christian, pre-Islamic and pre-Hindu-Buddhist 'traditional' society as subject to pressures produced by the modern nation-state and by media influences both national and global, and as needing to partly resist these pressures.

Conversation as an Alternative to Violence: The Formation of 'the Social'

Culture, of course, is a widely used word, but has come to be seen, particularly since the advent of cultural studies, as increasingly complex. For a long time culture was seen by anthropologists and others as relatively unproblematic, meaning, in one of its senses analysed by Raymond Williams, a 'way of life'. The danger of this approach is that it tends towards a certain 'cultural essentialism', where cultures are seen as timeless essences, a way of imagining cultures which was particularly strong in the colonial period because it bolstered the view of colonial administrators that the 'natives' they governed in some ways existed outside time as innocent and backward subjects, hence needing to be governed. These assumptions were to varying degrees taken over by earlier anthropologists as they attempted to identify, categorize and defend cultural

formations, at particular points in history.[1] Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence that traditional societies had their own ways of incorporating concepts of time, and social change over time, in their own discourses about their communities: the Minangkabau in West Sumatra, for example, had terms for different kinds of *adat* or traditional customs, those that were permanent, and those that had been modified by consensus, over time, as a result of need.[2]

On the other hand, this study does not adopt entirely the postmodern view of cultures, whereby cultures are seen not as 'ways of life', but rather as sets of discourses about culture, and simulacra standing in for a way of life. There is no doubt that—as a result of the increasing role that media and tourism play in contemporary life—culture and cultural formations in an era of globalization do also exist as a media phenomenon comprised of discourses and sign systems and simulacra, and film is one of the media forms by which these sign systems and simulacra are disseminated. Nevertheless, this study does not take the view that cultures are simply sign systems, discourses and simulacra. On the contrary, it takes the view that, to varying degrees, cultures are implemented and embodied forms of life, no matter how many more questions this idea of embodiment raises.

To begin with I wish first to raise the question of how we conceive of 'the social' at all, and of the relation of 'the social' to the cultural, for if there is a social dimension with cultural features, it is not sufficient to conceive of these as inherently only a collection of simulacra, even if, in a modern media-dominated world, they appear to be becoming so. To

[1] Joel Kahn has critiqued implicit notions of a 'timeless' traditional Minangkabau matrilineal society in the work of earlier anthropologists, and in statements by members of the culture about 'a golden age', given the changes in the social structure of Minangkabau society introduced by Dutch colonialism in the nineteenth century, which even leads him to suggest, at one point, that 'there is no such thing as "traditional Minangkabau society"'. See J.S. Kahn, '"Tradition", Matriliny and Change among the Minangkabau of Indonesia', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 132, 1976, 79.

[2] For a discussion of different kinds of *adat*, see Christine Dobbin, 'The Exercise of Authority in the Minangkabau in the Late Eighteenth Century', in Anthony Reid and Lance Castles, eds, *Pre-colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia: The Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Bali-Lombok, South Celebes*, Kuala Lumpur, The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975, 77–89. Dobbin, using Minangkabau terms, distinguishes between four kinds of *adat*, two of which are *adat nan sebenarnya adat* ('*adat* which is truly *adat*, which was considered eternal and identical with the natural law') and *adat nan diadatkan* ('*adat* which is made of *adat*, or customs optionally observed, depending upon the unanimous decisions of a *negeri's penghulus* [village community leadership]'); ibid., 88.

prepare the conceptual grounds, this chapter commences with a discussion of 'the social' as it has been developed by Scottish philosopher David Hume, and reworked and extended by Gilles Deleuze in an early work, in fact his first published book, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, published in 1953. In the next chapter, in my discussion of body language in some Indonesian films, I will further develop notions of culture as embodied, and how we may identify this, drawing upon concepts developed by anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu and, even earlier, by Gregory Bateson.

The first question is not how we can be sure there is a culture, nor how can we identify it, but rather is it possible to avoid sociality—the tendency to form social groups? And if the presence of social groups is undeniable, how do we describe them? Here we might invoke an axiom of Deleuze presented early in Chap. 2 of his book on Hume, a chapter entitled 'Cultural World and General Rules': 'The truth is that an individual always belongs to a clan or a community'.[3] Fundamental to Hume's work is a critique of the theories of Thomas Hobbes, in particular the Hobbesian view of human nature as fundamentally determined by egoism. For Deleuze, one of Hume's simplest but most important ideas is that 'human beings are much less egoistic than they are partial'.[4] For Hume, fundamental to the constitution of society is the family, which is based on sympathy, 'sympathy between parents, and sympathy of parents for their offspring'.[5] On the other hand, families are partial: they exclude one another. Deleuze writes:

> The parents of one family are always the strangers of other families. Consequently, a contradiction explodes inside nature. The problem of society, in this sense, is not a problem of limitation, but rather a problem of integration. To integrate sympathies is to make sympathy transcend its contradiction and natural partiality. Such an integration implies a positive moral world, and is brought about by the positive invention of such a world … The moral world affirms its reality when the contradiction is effectively dissipated, when conversation is possible as an alternative to violence, when property supersedes greed …[6]

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature* (Translated and with an Introduction by Contantin V. Boundas), New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, 38.

[4] Ibid., 38.

[5] Ibid., 39.

[6] Ibid., 39–40.

In Deleuze's reading of Hume, society comes about as an attempt to integrate competing and conflicting sympathies. The moral world is not natural; it is not to be reduced to a 'moral instinct', nor to the natural determination of sympathy. Rather it is artificial and invented, a product of society, which itself is an invention. It is in society, and through the esteem or respect generated in society, that social contradictions can be reduced, where conversation—even between parties not partial to one another, not in sympathy with one another—can be mobilized, and where these conversations can be about property arrangements. Sociality involves the capacity for conversation.

If one looks at regional societies in the Indonesian archipelago, societies which pre-existed the nation-state, what one finds is a variety of different ways in which these ends—frameworks for conversation and for deliberation about property arrangements—are arrived at, and in some societies these frameworks and arrangements are highly inventive. As we shall see, one also finds invented frameworks for conversations (and other locally specific arrangements for regulating the society) incorporated in Indonesian films about regional areas, along with a variety of other cultural features.

Let us continue a little further in this conversation generated by Deleuze about Hume's views on the formation of society and of the individual within a society. In contrast to Hobbes, for Deleuze 'the essence of society is not the law, but the institution'.[7] Of course, we may comment, the creation of institutions, even via dialogue, is possible only through some exercise of power, and involves ideologies and assumptions that reflect and express these power relations. So in a conception of human nature in which society plays a large role, by integrating partialities, one is of course formed and moulded by one's society; but is one, in fact, 'constructed' by one's society, even if one's society is itself a construction, an invention? For Deleuze a fundamental distinction that Hume affirms is 'between the whole of nature which includes the artifice and the mind affected and determined by this whole'.[8] So one can be part of a society, but there is an important difference between the individual mind and the invented society and culture of which one is a member, even as that society contributes to the formation of one's subjectivity. In this way society is itself invented

[7] Ibid., 45.
[8] Ibid., 44.

by agreements between humans about conventions that are to govern institutions. And while the social involves power relations and ideologies, the creation of social relations should also be seen as containing creative possibilities, as it addresses absences within a society. With this in mind, Deleuze sums up some of these arguments about institutions, including the importance of time and of history in the invention and the continuing evolution of a society and its institutions, in the following way:

> The institution, unlike the law, is not a limitation but rather a model of actions, a veritable enterprise, an invented system of positive means or a positive invention of indirect means. This understanding of the institution effectively reverses the problem: outside of the social there lies the negative, the lack, or the need. The social is profoundly creative, inventive and positive.[9]

Deleuze goes on to quote a passage from Hume affirming that cultures are formed, and humans enter them, in some ways similar to the ways in which a language is formed, and humans come to use it. One of the implications of this last point is of course that societies evolve over a very long period of time, and in this process they not only establish deep-rooted institutions but both the societies themselves and the institutions are subject to change.

Before I commence an exposition and analysis of relevant films, which stage their dramas in older, 'traditional', societies, one further point needs to be made. Often 'culture' is seen by cultural theorists as an inherently unifying and homogenizing term, a term that plays down class conflict and class contradiction. At the same time, this kind of emphasis, while a necessary corrective, tends to play down creative elements within a society, and it is the creative elements in a society, whether at the level of institutions or in terms of the arts and forms of communication, that we refer to as cultural. However, while some of the Indonesian films to be discussed espouse the idea of the particularity of a regional culture and its institutions (or of different cultural specificities in general) they do not play down conflict between social groups. Indeed conflict—which is often seen as inherent to narrative—is found in these films in differences not just between individual characters, but also between different social groupings in these films, however much that society is conceived in communitarian terms.

[9] Ibid., 45–6.

The Quest for Regional Authenticity in *Harimau Tjampa* (1953)

Harimau Tjampa ('The Tiger from Tjampa') is often cited in Indonesia as the most significant surviving example of an early Indonesian film that attempts systematically to incorporate aspects of a regional traditional society into film, and base its story around the exemplification of regional cultural values. Based on a script by Usmar Ismail and Alwi Dahlan, both of whom were born in West Sumatra, and set in matrilineal villages in the Minangkabau highlands in the late colonial period, this film depicts the role of the West Sumatran martial art, *pencak silat*, in Minangkabau culture, and particularly its relation to Islamic values of self-restraint. The film was directed by the Javanese, Djadoeg Djayakusuma, who took over the project from Usmar Ismail after Usmar was invited to the USA to explore the Hollywood film industry. Extensive outdoor scenes for *Harimau Tjampa* were filmed on location in West Sumatra, the interiors being filmed in a Jakarta studio, using Minangkabau people resident in Jakarta as extras.

West Sumatra as a region is best known for its Minangkabau culture. The Indonesian historian and social commentator, Taufik Abdullah, has discussed Minangkabau society and culture, and changes within it, at length in two excellent essays. Traditionally, Minangkabau culture is matrilineal and centres on the mother: inheritance laws transmit the matrilocal communal house (*rumah gadang*) and inalienable subsistence farming land from mother to daughter, while the mother's eldest brother (known as the *mamak*), is regarded as the head of the family 'responsible for the maintenance of inherited property (*harato pusako*) and the welfare of his sister's children, and is the representative of the family in suku affairs'.[10] The tension between the matrilineal *adat* of the Minangkabau region and patriarchal Islam has also been discussed at length by Abdullah, himself a Minangkabau. Abdullah argues that rather than there being an inherent and irresolvable conflict between matrilineal *adat* and patriarchal Islam, there is an in-built tension between the two, in a society that historically seems to have demanded some in-built conflict to achieve integration.[11] One of the issues explored by Abdullah is the question of how change

[10]Taufik Abdullah, 'Modernization in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatra in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century', in Claire Holt, ed., *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1972, 194.

[11]Taufik Abdullah, 'Adat and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau', *Indonesia* 2, 1966, 3.

occurs in conservative, traditional Islamic Minangkabau society, and here Abdullah examines both historical changes in Minangkabau society and changes in the role of Islam there, noting that in the early nineteenth century the Islamic reform movement, initiated by the Padri, resulted in the strengthening of Islam in Minangkabau society, despite the defeat of the Padri by the Dutch at the end of the Padri wars in 1837.[12] For Abdullah, as a consequence, in West Sumatra, by the mid nineteenth century, as well as tension, there was a strong identification between Islam and the core *adat*, the matrilineal inheritance law, which itself was pre-Islamic.[13]

Both Abdullah and Kahn have discussed ways in which, in the nineteenth century, the Dutch changed 'traditional' Minangkabau society, Kahn arguing that so-called 'traditional Minangkabau society', as it exists today, is really the result of considerable Dutch intervention, particularly as a result of the introduction of taxation by forced labour, and the way this was organized to be administered by the village heads and the councils of *mamaks*.[14] Nevertheless, the inclusiveness of Kahn's views has been questioned, for example by Suzanne Brenner, who points out that Kahn, whose prior work engaged primarily with issues of political economy, seems reluctant to conceive of culture or society in terms other than those that encompass economic and political relations, and that his book *Constituting the Minangkabau* has little to say about women or Islam in Minangkabau society.[15]

Harimau Tjampa is set in a Minangkabau village area in the highlands of West Sumatra, in the late colonial period, and no reference in the film is made to the regional capital, the coastal trading town of Padang, nor even to the highland fort town of Bukittinggi. The film's main place of reference is a *nagari*, the basic village community, with its irrigated rice fields, matrilineal houses of residence with the distinctive rising buffalo horns

[12] The Padri movement was initiated by Minangkabau pilgrims returning from Mecca, who were influenced by the new Wahabism emerging in the early nineteenth century, and demanded—in Minangkabau communities where Sufism had considerable influence—a return not only to *sharia* law, but to the original tenets of the Prophet. See Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784–1847*, London and Malmö, Curzon Press, 1983, 128–41.

[13] Taufik Abdullah, 'Modernization in the Minangkabau World', 200.

[14] Ibid., 207. See also Kahn, '"Tradition", Matriliny and Change among the Minangkabau of Indonesia', 64–95.

[15] Suzanne Brenner, 'Anthropology, History, Indonesia' (review article), *American Anthropologist* 96 (4), December 1994, 974–6. The issue of what matrilineal *adat* means for women in a Minangkabau village in the 1980s and 1990s is addressed in Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2002.

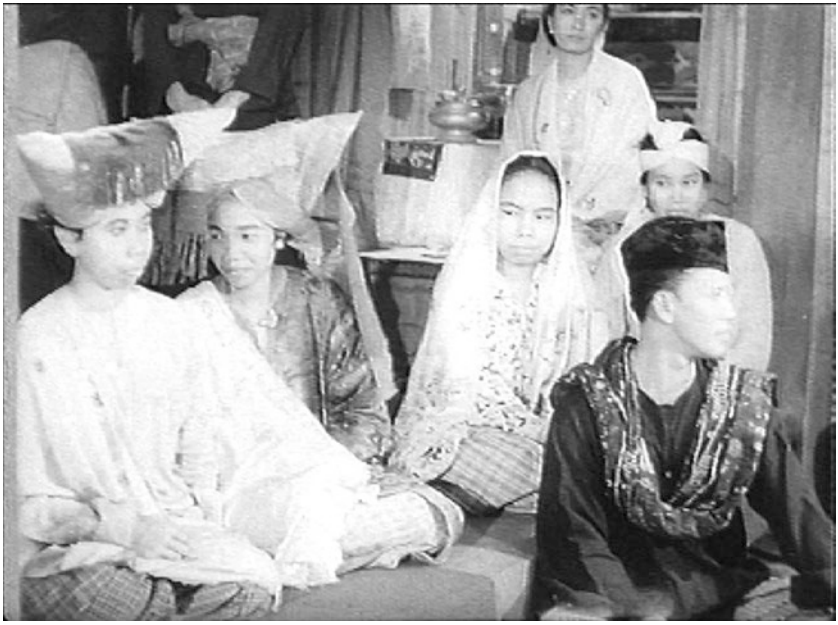

Fig. 4.1 Wedding scene from *Harimau Tjampa* ('The Tiger from Tjampa', 1953), set in the matrilineal Minangkabau highlands of West Sumatra in the 1930s, and directed by Djayakusuma (Courtesy of Irwan Usmar Ismail and the Perfini Company)

shape at either end, and nearby rice storage buildings—and the village itself with its central mosque and public bathing place, its *warungs* and coffee shops, and with administrative buildings for the *penghulu* (chief of the *nagari*). The Islamic presence in the village is augmented by a nearby *surau* (Islamic school), where students live together with their teacher, who stresses Islamic values in his teaching of *pencak silat* (local martial arts), a core activity at the school, in addition to the teaching of Islam.[16] Communal bonds in the village and the presence of a wider community are suggested by four events in the film: a communal working day; a horse race at a race track; a village market day with traders coming from elsewhere; and a wedding, at which traditional dances are performed (Fig. 4.1).[17]

[16]For a discussion of the *surau* in Minangkabau society, including its origins in similar institutions in pre-Islamic times, its characteristic curriculum and teaching practices, and role in the society, see Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy*, 120–5.

[17]Dances performed in the wedding scene include the handkerchief dance and the parasol dance.

Fig. 4.2 The circular *randai* dance, filmed on location in the highlands of West Sumatra in 1953 for Djayakusuma's *Harimau Tjampa* (Courtesy of the Indonesian Film Center)

The milieus of all four events are established with external shots of a documentary kind, showing for example, the communal preparation of food; crowded groups of local people, including matriarchs dressed in rich garments that signify their status and the respect accorded them; and shots of a celebratory performance of *randai* (a traditional dance performed by men moving in circles) with young men dressed entirely in black performing this striking circular dance (Fig. 4.2).[18] Music in the film is entirely derived from the West Sumatran region, in particular the use of the *talempong* (ensemble of small kettle gongs) at moments of excitement or ritual in the film, together with a sung ballad that introduces the film and punctuates it intermittently, and the various songs accompanying the dances.

[18] For a discussion of *randai*, see Kirsten Pauka, *Theater and Martial Arts in West Sumatra: Randai and Silek of the Minangkabau*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998; Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof, *Dictionary of Traditional South-East Asian Theatre*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1994, 228–9.

Synopsis of *Harimau Tjampa*

Lukman, a newcomer to the *nagari*, is bent on avenging his father's murder. He hopes to do this by seeking to learn *pencak silat* with a local *silat* master, Datuk Langit, who is also the village head and who is described as having many wives. Rejected by the exploitative Datuk Langit as a suitable student, because he cannot pay him with a buffalo, Lukman becomes the pupil of Saleh, whose own practice of *pencak silat* is connected with Islam, and who insists in all his teachings that *pencak silat* is essentially a form of self-defence, and that one must learn patience ('harus sabar'). Saleh is played in the film by a leading West Sumatran exponent of *pencak silat* at the time, Malindo Maradjo, and the film includes scenes of instruction in *silat*, and of *silat* combat.

Datuk Langit regards Saleh as an enemy. Lukman becomes embroiled in this conflict, but also makes an enemy of Biran, Datuk Langit's henchman, when he asks for the hand in marriage of Biran's sister, Kiah, who shows overtly she is attracted to Lukman. Saleh repeatedly warns Lukman of the need to maintain self-control, both as a fundamental principal of *silat*, and as a survival stratagem in the village. Lukman eventually has to leave Saleh's school, for he is temperamentally unable to follow Saleh's advice regarding the importance of self-control. Later Lukman accidentally kills Biran in a fight over a gambling game. In prison Lukman learns that it was in fact Datuk Langit who ordered his father's death, and he escapes from prison in order to challenge the Datuk, who is now forcing Kiah to become his fourth wife. Before he confronts Datuk Langit, Lukman visits Saleh, who recognizes that Lukman has matured, and blesses his quest to expose the Datuk, saying Lukman has now become the 'Harimau Tjampa'. Lukman defeats Datuk Langit in hand-to-hand combat and the Datuk is exposed for his crime. Lukman returns to prison, with Kiah vowing to await his release. The film concludes with a choir heard singing the final lines of the ballad with which the film began.

While the plot of *Harimau Tjampa* might relegate the film to being a conventional martial arts revenge story, the film has numerous inventive and unique features. Rather than emphasizing the melodramatic potential of the story, the film narrates its story in a matter-of-fact and restrained way,

with an almost sardonic view of the village community, even as it incorporates and celebrates a range of village traditions. The film opens with a ballad, introducing the film as set in colonial times 'when life was hard', as documentary shots establish the milieu. Verses from this ballad are sung by a chorus nine times at various points on the soundtrack, punctuating the film with philosophical reflections and dividing the story into sections. The first scene is located in a *lapau* (coffee house) where Lukman, as a newcomer, is informed by a local, Sidin, regarding the power elites in the village, headed by Datuk Langit who, we are told, lives in the house of his newest wife. While the village is matrilineal, under Islam a man is entitled to have more than one wife, and the wealthy Datuk Langit takes advantage of this right, even attempting—against her will and against the will of his third wife—to marry a further woman. Abdullah has described the *lapau* as a place frequented by people from outside the *nagari*, mentioning that it is also known as the *balai randah* (lower council), a place for criticism of the elites in the village.[19] In this way some degree of class conflict is incorporated into the film.

In the coffee house scenes, both staff and customers engage in a constant banter, even using Malay *pantun* (rhyming couplets) to do so. For example, here is Sidin responding to the repartee of a young woman serving coffee:

> Kalau Sidin ada uang, ya, Sidin sayang,
> Kalau tidak ada uang, Sidin melayang.
> [If Sidin has money, then: 'I love you, Sidin, dear'.
> But if Sidin has no money, Sidin can just disappear!]
> (my translation)

The capacity to excel in Malay *pantun* is regarded as a skill in this region, with *pantun* competitions being held regularly in West Sumatra, even today.

Thus two aspects of the regional oral culture, ballads and *pantun*, are incorporated into the film within the first few minutes of it commencing. Even more striking in the film is the use in the dialogue of *pepatah adat*, a term referring to the aphorisms that contain the wisdom of the oral culture; *pepatah adat* are spoken in a distinctive rhyming couplet form, and were used by the local people colloquially, as well as in official *adat*

[19] Taufik Abdullah, 'Modernization in the Minangkabau World', 197.

situations, to express maxims by which characters advise each other, or comment on behaviour. Abdullah has noted that, beyond the *nagari*, traditional Minangkabau society did not have a functional hierarchical central authority, at least until the coming of Dutch colonialism, and it is in this sense that it was a pre-state society. Commenting on the role of the *pepatah adat*, Abdullah writes:

> In the absence of a functional hierarchical authority, the pepatah adat in the form of philosophical sayings are the symbols of Minangkabau unity and continuity. They bridge local variations and assure continuity over time. As a source of wisdom, the pepatah are a guide for maintaining social harmony and achieving an ideal society. Thus they are used not only to support but also to challenge the existing order.[20]

Numerous socially instructive *pepatah adat* are found in the film and, curiously, they are mainly voiced by Saleh, the devoutly Islamic teacher of *pencak silat*, rather than by the village head, Datuk Langit, who may even be loosely identified with the Dutch, for as village head he is shown dispensing corrupt justice and rewards to villagers in an office near where Indonesians, dressed in the uniforms of Dutch-controlled 'native' military police, are gathered and on patrol. Abdullah has pointed out that one way in which the Dutch interfered with Minangkabau society was to put the *penghulu* or village head in charge of organizing *corvée* (obligatory unpaid labour on coffee plantations), which was a substitute for tax collection in colonial Minangkabau society, a policy that seriously reduced the respect accorded to the *nagari* heads, even while in some cases it may have financially advantaged them.[21] Examples of *pepatah adat* used at different points in the film, and spoken by the teacher, Pak Saleh, are as follows:

> To learn *silat* is not easy, Lukman. Skill in *silat* only comes to people who are truly firm in their convictions. Look at this picture! This man was once a great fighter. *But even the most agile squirrel can fall when he jumps …*

> For me, an enemy is not to be sought out, though nor should one avoid him. *But when you're pressed too far, when you're pushed back from the field into the jungle, then you can use silat to wipe away humiliation …*

[20] Ibid., 193.
[21] Ibid., 207.

> You still forget what I told you, Lukman: *Bathe where it's shallow! Don't swim in deep water yet!*
>
> *If your hand involves you in something,*
> *Then your shoulder must bear it.*
> Don't run away from your responsibilities, Lukman.

Lukman also utters some *pepatah adat*, for example:

> Do I have to give myself up … and let Kiah be snatched away?
> *Throw out the water, when you have some?*
> *If you don't know when the rain will come!*
> That's what a madman would do!
>
> (my translation)

The fact that the Minangkabau *pepatah adat* are primarily spoken in the film by Saleh, and by an old man imprisoned with Lukman, and finally by Lukman himself once he has gained wisdom, but not by the head of the *nagari*, Datuk Langit, the villain of the film, indicates both the increased centrality of Islam in colonial society and also a certain sense in which this film partakes in disrespect for the *penghulu*, given his role in colonial society. More clearly, however, in the circle surrounding Saleh, the film displays the intense spirit of community that underlies educational practices in Islam, and perhaps in an Islam practised in a society that still preserves the communicative and educational practices of what was an oral culture. Education occurs within a group that lives together and studies together as a group, rather than individually. At the same time, the charismatic nature of the teacher, and his availability to and closeness to the students, makes this an educational institution rather different from what is usually found in a bureaucratized educational institution in a developed Western society.

While my discussion so far has emphasized the community found in the *surau*, in the film the portrait of Minangkabau village society as a whole is different, and far from idealized. Sidin in the opening discussion in the coffee house cautions the newcomer, Lukman, describing the village as dangerous, and Saleh later describes it as 'a nest of tigers'. The second scene of the film, set in the home of Datuk Langit's third and wealthiest wife (and beginning with a discussion of coffee that parallels the opening discussion in the coffee house) indicates that the central

antagonist, Datuk Langit, is living according to Minangkabau matrilocal arrangements, but his disparagement of the quality of the coffee served by his wife, Baidah, and his dealings with his henchman, Biran, about the proposed assault on Saleh, show him to be both a domestic and local tyrant. Indeed, the society is depicted as one in which power brokers regularly retain henchmen to control the society in the way they want, and if the community is envisaged as tightly knit, at one level this is via the over-riding control of Datuk Langit. The society indeed exists according to different groupings. For 'the little people'—exemplified by Sidin—playfulness, irony, camaraderie and caution are the form their survival and resistance take. It might well be considered that the exploration of *silat* in the film, while taking the form of physical combat which is studied in an Islamic context, and linked to Islamic philosophies of restraint, is also a set of meditations on survival in a dangerous world, by developing skills which are only used when necessary, are not designed to provoke, but teach the protagonist the importance of knowing when and how to make the critical defensive move, the move that turns the tables. It was the failure of Lukman's father to understand this that led to his demise, and his son's quest for justice inevitably involves coming to learn what his father did not understand. The absence of a true rule of law in the civil society is remarked upon in the opening ballad of the film, and linked through the ballad and through the detail of the film to colonialism, where the power of the Datuk is sanctioned by a permanently illegal political arrangement constituted ultimately on force and not justice. It is implied in one of the songs that teachers such as Saleh are rare, for the society has been corrupted politically.

In the film ideas of restraint and self-control are of primary importance, and seen as an essential part of learning, but the dramatization of the issue of restraint is not confined to statements by Saleh, but is part of the dramatic structure of the film. One may ask what is the main conflict in the film? Is it the conflict between Lukman and Datuk Langit, or is it the conflict between *guru* and *murid* (teacher and pupil), Saleh and Lukman, over Lukman's inability to control his involvement in conflictual situations, and the way in which this conflicts with fundamental principles of the philosophy behind *pencak silat*? The connection insisted upon between *pencak silat* and Islamic submission and restraint introduces new concepts and de-emphasizes the revenge plot around which the action is organized. Each time that Lukman infringes the interdiction on lack of self-control, this becomes an issue that is taken up directly by Saleh in the group, and leads

eventually to Lukman's expulsion from the group. The repeated conflict central to the film's narrative, which consumes much of the dramatic time of the film, and from which the audience may be expected to learn, is thus not the conflict between Lukman and Datuk Langit, but that between Lukman's teacher of *silat*, Pak Saleh, and Lukman, over Lukman's lack of self-control. In fact it should be considered that the plot contains a double conflict, and that the conflict with Datuk Langit is only pursued and resolved after the conflict with Saleh is resolved, once the wisdom achieved by learning self-control has been attained.

Note that in *Harimau Tjampa*, for all the emphasis on teaching and instruction, and on following the codes that the teacher enjoins on one in the intensely focused *guru–murid* relationship, the final movement is a movement away from the teacher and the teacher's influence; and a willingness on the part of the student to attempt something that the teacher cannot encompass within the framework of his teaching.

Lukman:	Do you think I am afraid of facing Datuk Langit? No, Pak! I will not be afraid when I face Datuk Langit! Even if I am not expert in *silat*, still this is my way of being a man, Pak!
Saleh:	Right then! You have now become a Tiger, 'Harimau Tjampa'! You can do whatever you like. Whatever happens, you're the one who'll bear the consequences. (my translation)

In this dialogue, the rebellion against the teacher seems to be proposed by the film as an important stage in the student's development and is recognized as such by the teacher even though it also provokes some anger in the teacher.

Recent scholarly research reports that training in *silat* has long been connected with a belief in tiger spirits. The 'Tiger King' was regarded as a patron of *silat* students, and the aura surrounding this legend signified a range of moral values.[22] At the final stage of *silat* training, *putus kaji* (sever-

[22] See Bart Barendregt, 'Written by the Hand of Allah: Pencak Silat of Minangkabau, West Sumatra', *Oideion: the Performing Arts World Wide* 2, 1995. P.E. de Josselin de Jong records that the legendary founding king of Minangkabau, Sri Maharadjo Diradjo, 'contracted marriages with creatures from different parts of Minangkabau . . . When the first king married a tigress (*harimau Tjampu*), the offspring became the inhabitants of Agam'. See P.E. de Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan: Socio-political Structure in Indonesia*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1952, 99.

ance from the teacher at the completion of learning), skill was arrived at in a fight with the Tiger King. In Hindu-Buddhist times there was an emphasis on an inner force (*tenaga dalam*), learned from nature, and *silat* moves are often named after the movements of particular animals. With the coming of Islam there was a shift in emphasis and a new *silat* approach developed, sometimes known as *Silek Ulama* (*silat* of the wise man), which concentrated on the establishment of sustainable relations with fellow humans: enemies were not to be sought out. The film *Harimau Tjampa* exemplifies most of these features of *pencak silat*: *putus kaji* is when his teacher tells him everything is now up to him; the fight with Datuk Langit in effect is the fight with the tiger, and throughout there is an emphasis on learning *silat* primarily as a form of self-defence and not aggression.

It has been argued that *Harimau Tjampa* not only incorporates numerous traditional elements of Minangkabau regional culture, and some of the roles of Islam there, but appears to locate them in a specific historical nexus that is understood by the film's scriptwriters in terms of changes to that culture brought about by colonialism, even as the colonial presence is not emphasized in the film. As a film made shortly after Indonesia achieved independence, *Harimau Tjampa* was intended to open up the possibility of an Indonesian regional culture being the subject of an Indonesian feature film. Its emphasis is therefore on the core location of the regional culture, the village *nagari*, and the traditions that could still be found there of interest to audiences at the time. As we have seen, *Harimau Tjampa* emphasizes traditional martial arts (and posits a close connection between them and Islam), traditional music and dance, and even frequently foregrounds the distinctive uses of language in the region: *pantun* and *pepatah adat*. It also provides the viewer with remarkable documentary images from this society as it was in 1953, and dramatizes, in its unusual doubly conflicted narrative structure, discourses about the need for restraint and self-control in situations of conflict, which might be seen as both relevant to the cultural values of some groups within that society, and indispensable as an efficient survival stratagem. To some extent a-historical, because not directly engaging with history though set in the 1930s, implicitly in the film there is also scepticism with regard to the traditional culture in the context of partial collaboration by village authorities with the colonial government. While stressing the indignities to which women can be subjected, particularly polygamy which has not been agreed upon by all partners, and women's resistance to this, *Harimau Tjampa* does not explore in any detail the matrilineal aspects of Minangkabau society, which is presented as background to the story

only. Nevertheless, in a number of brief scenes the women are depicted as resourceful and resilient, Baidah arguing trenchantly with her Datuk husband and even making romantic overtures to Lukman when he is in prison at a time when the Datuk is attempting to force an arranged marriage on Kiah; while Kiah earlier on initiated the relationship with Lukman (and not vice versa) by demonstratively signalling her attraction to him. The division of the film into sections preceded by songs which address the moral ethos of the society, and the use of *pepatah adat*, the maxims espoused within the traditional oral culture, often presented in the form of Malay *pantun* and highlighting valued forms of behaviour, give the film its own kind of Brechtian didactic quality, via poetry, even though it is unlikely there was any direct Brechtian influence. Rather, the mode of narration and forms of dialogue in the film draw upon existing philosophical, poetic, dramatic and musical stratagems in Minangkabau society and culture.

The Region and Historical Change in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (1977)

Para Perintis Kemerdekaan ('Pioneers of Freedom'), partly shot on location in West Sumatra, was made some 25 years after *Harimau Tjampa*, in a substantially different period of Indonesian cinema, after the introduction of colour and widescreen and at a time when more funding was available for more expensive productions. Written and directed by poet and intellectual Asrul Sani, who was born in Rao, West Sumatra, and produced by a company owned by a family originating from West Sumatra, it is one of the best of a small number of quasi-historical films made in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s. This film includes aspects of performance traditions from West Sumatra as background, but it is more concerned to address regional history and the emergence of historical forces and modernist intellectual movements in the region in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The contrast between *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, with its emphasis on historical change in an international context, and *Harimau Tjampa*, shows how partial any film about a society must inevitably be, and that other perspectives are always possible.

In *Constituting the Minangkabau*, an anthropological study which, among other things, examines the intellectual fertility of Minangkabau society in the early twentieth century, Joel Kahn writes on the different ways in which the Minangkabau have been conceived, highlighting that

while they have been conceived of as an exceptionally modern ethnic group in Indonesia, they are also conceived of in traditionalist terms. The traditionalist view is one that conceives of them as *suku* (tribes) living in networks of villages, with a 'focus on clans and chiefs, on matrilineal inheritance practices, and on the syncretic nature of local Islamic practices'.[23] It might be claimed that *Harimau Tjampa* largely reflects this view.

The view of the Minangkabau as a modern grouping from the early twentieth century on, emphasizes their openness to change, the willingness of the males to travel to gain experience outside their society, the high levels of literacy in Minangakabau villages, and the demand for education in that society, together with the unusually large role Minangkabau have played in the formation of modern Indonesia. This is a view more emphasized in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, a film set not in Minangkabau highland villages, but in the coastal town of Padang, and in Padang Panjang, a town regarded as the gateway to the highlands. In this film the engagement in the 1920s of West Sumatran people with colonialism, with historical change, with the rights of women and with Islamic modernism, is the subject of the film. As we shall see, while *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* does not include *pepatah adat*, it does include a specific form of dialogue designed to arrive at a consensus, known as *mufakat*, practised by communities in West Sumatra and elsewhere.

In *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, the presence of colonialism and colonial authorities in Minangkabau society is directly addressed. In the pre-credit preface to the film there is a written statement that, in all the dark years of colonialism, the first ray of hope for the occupied countries of Asia was the Japanese defeat of Russia at Port Arthur in 1904, showing for the first time in modern memory that an Asian power could defeat a Western power. This is followed by a very effective montage of black-and-white historical photos of the late colonial period, showing Sumatran leaders, but also the charismatic Sukarno and other leaders in Java, the sequence accompanied by orchestral music strongly imbued with a Sumatran Islamic feeling. The film therefore commences with a powerful, graphically presented sense of the seriousness of the intrusion of European colonialism into Asian countries, and of people's resistance to it.

[23] Joel S. Kahn, *Constituting the Minangkabau: Peasants, Culture, and Modernity in Colonial Indonesia*, Oxford, Berg, 1993, 5.

Stylistically *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* is quite a talky film, with numerous scenes of discussion and debate, but it is also a very stylish film. The film opens in a mosque in Padang with a scene in which a revered Islamic teacher, Haji Jalaludin, is arrested on grounds of sedition while preaching his sermon. He is later sentenced to prison by Dutch colonial authorities. Opening and closing with speeches, the film is punctuated by formal meetings, whether of Dutch courts or formal encounters between Islamic leaders—with their rhetorical forms, protocols, traditions and forms of address. This emphasis on 'talk' in the film is related to the director's interest in portraying different kinds of rhetorical schemes and forms of conversation encountering one another—and their implied cultural values. But the film is not oppressive in this regard. Rather, it incorporates a powerful sense of a clash between opportunities for dialogue or the use of brute force. This is done with humour, due to the perceptiveness in the characterization of the antagonists. Additionally, quite a large number of the characters in the film are students involved in intellectual activity, their intellectual ferment stimulated by the Islamic reform movement that had occurred a decade earlier in West Sumatra. By 1926 this intellectual ferment is associated with the increasing resistance to Dutch colonialism.

Synopsis of *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*
Haji Jalaludin is arrested in a mosque on grounds of preaching sermons seditious to the colonial state. Present at the subsequent trial is a young woman from Padang, Halimah, sympathetic to the Haji's views. Also present is Hamid, a student whose late father was a Haji persecuted by the Dutch. Halimah is oppressed by her husband, who refuses to support her but will not divorce her. Receiving no help from a local religious authority in Padang—who in fact endorses her husband's behaviour by declaring a *nusyuz* to the effect that she has infringed her husband's rights—Halimah seeks help from an Islamic preacher, Haji Wali, at Padang Panjang, whose religious school Hamid has joined as a student. Haji Wali's students are involved in underground anti-Dutch activities, and publish a newspaper, some are even attracted by communism. Despite opposition from Dutch authorities, Haji Wali calls a meeting at his mosque in Padang Panjang to discuss the case of Halimah, and various religious leaders attend, notwithstanding the

presence of the police outside the meeting. By this stage near to despair, Halimah in Padang goes to her village mosque to publicly renounce her religion, for such an act will dissolve her marriage. On the way she encounters hostility from villagers who have heard of her intentions (Fig. 4.3). At the point at which she announces in the mosque to those gathered there: 'There is no God!' she

Fig. 4.3 Halimah meets opposition as she goes to the mosque in order to disavow her religion, and hence successfully annul her marriage to her oppressive husband, in Asrul Sani's *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* ('Pioneers of Freedom', 1977), set in West Sumatra in the 1920s (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

experiences a mystical vision, and completes the statement thus: 'There is no God … except Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet!' At the very same moment the *mufakat* convened by Haji Wali in Padang Panjang concludes, pronouncing in favour of Halimah's rights, declaring her marriage dissolved.

The film subsequently traces Halimah's gradual but thorough radicalization, both as a women's emancipist and as a nationalist

political agitator. It also outlines an array of political forces emerging at the time, climaxing with the short-lived communist rebellion of 1927, which is ruthlessly put down by the Dutch, and which involves some of Haji Wali's former students (Fig. 4.4). In seeking to define her own role within Islam, Halimah enters a complex political world where issues of women's rights and religious reform are connected with anti-colonialism and social revolution. The film ends with Halimah, now being tried for sedition, making a speech in the courtroom before being sent to prison, as did Haji Jalaludin before her.

Fig. 4.4 Rural scene depicting the commencement of the short-lived communist rising in Minangkabau West Sumatra in January 1927, in Asrul Sani's *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* ('Pioneers of Freedom', 1977) (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

The most extraordinary, certainly surprising, scene in the film is the moment Halimah's disavowal of Islam is interrupted by her sudden profession of faith. In a film that is exceptionally rational, yet gently humorous, and systematic and committed in its exposition of the issues and the story, this sudden irruption of the religious disavowal, followed by the intrusion of the mystical—but rationally presented—religious vision and reconversion, provides both a turning point in the plot, and a striking moment in which the film's demands for both rational thought, and a commitment that goes beyond the rationally known, are incorporated.

While *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* was scripted and directed by Asrul Sani, it was based on various works by the Minangkabau writer, Hamka. Scripted in 1977 and completed by 1980, the film has received very little distribution in Indonesia. According to Krishna Sen, *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* was not allowed to be released until after the 1982 elections, because the film has as its backdrop early anti-Dutch nationalism inspired by Islam, and this was regarded as an image of Islam favourable to the election campaign of the Islamic Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party).[24] The religious issues regarding the rights of women are very directly stated in the film, and the communists depicted in the film, while seen as historically mistiming their rebellion, are not seen in a particularly unsympathetic light, though they are represented as misguided, and most of Haji Wali's students, who are their friends, pointedly refuse to take part in the rebellion.[25]

The credits to *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* state it is based on *Dibawah Lindungan Ka'bah* ('Under the Protection of the Ka'bah'), an early novel by Hamka published in 1938.[26] This novel narrates the story of the love of a young Minangkabau man of insufficient means, Hamid, for a neighbouring girl from a moderately well-off family, Zainub, a love which is never fulfilled and in effect results in the death of both. Hamid goes to Mecca to avoid interfering with the hopes of the girl's parents regarding her marriage; she pines away and he dies in Mecca on hearing of her death. Only two character names (Hamid and Zainub) and about one scene from this novel are taken over into the film, although the screenplay of the film, archived at Sinematek Indonesia in Jakarta, was given the title 'Dibawah Lindungan Ka'bah'. In fact the film is really based on four pages from a section entitled 'Nikah Si Kani' (Kani's Marriage) in Hamka's *Ayahku* ('My Father'), the lengthy biography of his father, the West Sumatran Islamic teacher Dr H. Abdulkarim Amrullah (known by his students at Padang Panjang as Haji Rasul), a biography first published in 1950.[27] In

[24] Krishna Sen, 'Indonesian Cinema 1965–1982: Perceptions of Society and History', PhD thesis, Monash University, 1987, 314.

[25] For a detailed account of the communist rising in West Sumatra in 1927, see Audrey R. Kahin, 'The 1927 Communist Uprising in Sumatra: A Reappraisal', *Indonesia* 62, 1996.

[26] Hamka (H.A.M.K. Amru'llah), *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah*, Bukittinggi and Djakarta, N.V. Nusantara, 1961.

[27] Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. H. Abdul Karim Amrullah Dan Perdjuangan Kaum Agama Di Sumatra*, second edition, Jakarta, Umminda, 1982.

the Foreword to his screenplay, Asrul Sani relates how by chance he met Hamka in the Taman Ismail Marzuki Cultural Centre in Jakarta some years before he wrote the screenplay, and how he suggested to Hamka that perhaps he might rewrite his novel *Dibawah Lindungan Ka'bah*, for the background to the story and events that occurred in West Sumatra in that period were much more important than its central story.[28] Commenting that Hamka smilingly replied that it was up to him (Asrul Sani) to rewrite the novel, Asrul then goes on to say that there was much in Hamka's *Ayahku* he had used in writing the film's scenario. Indeed, not only does the screenplay differ greatly from the earlier novel, but the completed film differs considerably from the screenplay, both of them showing an increasing interest in telling the story of the annulment of the marriage of Kani/Halimah, which is adapted from *Ayahku*, and presenting a broad portrait of the relationship between Islam and anti-colonial politics in West Sumatra in the 1920s.

This 'Nikah Si Kani' section of *Ayahku* tells how Haji Rasul, who by the mid 1920s was a respected religious teacher in Padang Panjang, intervened in the case of a young woman, Kani, who had been subjected to a *nusyuz* by a local *kadi* (judge in a Muslim *sharia* court) at the request of her husband, and of interventions Haji Rasul made in similar cases.[29] The *nusyuz* was a judgement passed on a woman at the request of her husband to the effect that she had infringed her husband's rights. Hamka backgrounds the general situation thus:

> Frequently women would become quite crazed as a result of a judgement such as this and would become resolute and would go to the mosque and would declare to the assembled congregation that at that moment they were renouncing Islam, did not believe in God, nor in the prophet, and that the *Qur'an* was a lie. For by taking this path of renouncing their religion, this in itself would cut their marriage bonds with their husbands. There were even uneducated women who inevitably would lose their way, as a result of years of being married, without any meaning to the marriage. They would then marry with another man, but were always harassed by their first husband, who still wanted power over them but would not support them. And the *Kadi* always decided in favour of such men. What was their intention in

[28] Asrul Sani, 'Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah', Jakarta, 1977, in the collection of 'Skenario' of Indonesian films in the library of Sinematek Indonesia.

[29] Hamka *Ayahku*, 121–9.

> making a plaything of the power of religion, if not from a lust for revenge and a feeling of hatred—perhaps sadism?[30] (my translation)

While reputed to be very strict, and even disputatious on many matters involving women (for example women's clothing), Haji Rasul regarded the issue of the power that religion gave men over women as a serious problem in the society. He eventually formulated a clause in marriage contracts which enabled women to buy their way out of unsatisfactory marriages, and this clause, so the biography claims, was subsequently adopted by the whole district.[31] As we see from the above quotation, the narrative of the original incident speaks not only 'of a woman', but also of women frequently going to the mosque to renounce their religion. So the extraordinary scene in the film of Halimah going to the mosque to renounce her religion was not exceptional in the first half of the twentieth century in West Sumatra, and indeed was often carried through fully, without the woman in mid-sentence withdrawing her disavowal of her religion, as Halimah does.[32]

After winning her case, Halimah forms women's educational and support groups and becomes involved in the anti-colonial movement. At the end of the film she is imprisoned on grounds of sedition, under circumstances similar to the imprisonment of Haji Jalaludin at the opening of the film. Here the model for Halimah is certainly not that of a poor peasant woman in a highland village, and indeed Halimah at this point appears to be modelled on an actual historical personage, Rasuna Said. Haji Rangkayo Rasuna Said—born in Maninjau in the highlands of West Sumatra in 1910—as a young woman in her early twenties became involved simultaneously in a number of progressive movements. In 1930 she resigned her job as a teacher in a girl's school because her attempts to include politics in the school's curriculum was rejected. She subsequently became secretary of PERMI (Persatoean Moeslimin Indonesia—United

[30] Ibid., 122.

[31] Ibid., 125.

[32] A recent detailed account of the life of Haji Rasul is to be found in Murni Djamal, 'The Origin of the Islamic Reform Movement in Minangkabau: Life and Thought of Abdul Karim Abdullah', *Studia Islamika* 5 (3), 1998. An account of the whole context of Indonesian Islamic modernism, including its West Sumatran pioneers, Haji Thaher Djalaluddin and Haji Rasul, and the emergence of its political dimension in Java, is found in Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900–1942*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1973.

Muslims of Indonesia) in the highland town of Bukittinggi, and there opened a PERMI school for young women.[33] She came under the influence of Haji Rasul, and was involved actively in debates about polygamy, which she saw as a political issue. In 1932 she was arrested and sent to prison in Semarang in Central Java, on the same grounds as were Halimah and Haji Jalaludin, namely speaking out against the Dutch in public—the first time a woman was arrested in West Sumatra on these grounds. In 1935, after being released she edited a magazine, *Raya*, but moved to Medan in North Sumatra, where her movements were less restricted by pro-government spies. Here she founded a school for girls and edited a magazine in support of women's rights, *Menara Putri*. She was active in various organizations in Padang during the Japanese occupation. During the 1950s she was elected as a member of the national parliament in Jakarta, and in 1959 was appointed to the Dewan Pertimbangan Agung (President's Advisory Council). She died in 1965.

While the character of Halimah, in its political aspects, appears to be inspired by the early life of Rasuna Said, the figure of Haji Jalaludin, the preacher arrested at the opening of the film, is almost certainly based on an historical figure of the same name, Haji Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaludin (1869–1956). Born into an aristocratic Minangkabau family, he studied in Cairo and was one of a number of early Indonesian reformers advocating the modernizing of Islam, though subsequently he lived in peninsular Malaya. Haji Jalaludin was known for his anti-colonial views. He was arrested in West Sumatra by the Dutch on a second return home visit there in 1927, and imprisoned for six months.

Mufakat and Islamic Reform in the Film

One further difference between the film and the biography is that the story of Kani is a story of a woman obtaining personal advice from her religious advisor, Haji Rasul, who appears to resolve the matter quickly, after having put to Kani a number of searching questions. But while in the film Halimah gets advice initially from Haji Wali, the latter affirms to her

[33] For an account of the activities of Rasuna Said, see Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927–1933)*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971, 194–8. For an account of the life of Haji Jalaludin (Sjech Thaher Djalaluddin), see Noer, *The Modernist Movement in Indonesia*, 33–5.

that ultimately the decision depends upon a meeting of a number of local progressive Islamic teachers. In the film more than a dozen *ulama* participate in this meeting, and the process by which the annulment is arrived at appears to be a process of group consultation which involves re-reading the *Qur'an* and arriving at a consensus. Hence this meeting takes the form of a *mufakat*, a traditional form of decision-making found both in Islam and in the village councils of West Sumatra.[34] This suggests that the film's director is more interested in celebrating such processes of consultation, rather than identifying Haji Rasul and strictly recreating his son's account of the incident. It is in the delay before this *mufakat* is convened that the film creates the tension and crisis for Halimah, leading to her attempted renunciation of Islam at the mosque in Padang. Using parallel editing of scenes, the film intercuts this scene of attempted disavowal in the mosque in Padang with a scene of the *mufakat* taking place at the same time in the mosque at Padang Panjang.

Other differences are that in the film the Dutch are shown as siding with the older generation of Islamic teachers and with the *kadi*, the Islamic judge whose ruling is in accordance with *sharia* law and supports the husband. The meeting of the progressive religious teachers at the mosque in Padang Panjang is regarded by the Dutch as potentially subversive, and the mosque is shown surrounded by native police. In Hamka's biography of his father, since there is no public meeting, there are no police or military involved. However, it is reported in the biography that a Dutch advisor on religion and indigenous affairs in the region, Dr Hazeu, engaged with Haji Rasul after his decision to dissolve Kani's marriage became widely known. Hazeu argued that on the basis of books such as *Fat'hui Qarib*, and what appears to be a nineteenth-century commentary on it, the '*kitab*' (book) *Bajuri* (both books referred to in the film by Haji Wali's opponent, Haji Makmur), Haji Rasul's decision was wrong. Haji Rasul replied to Hazeu in a brief open letter, using as his sources the *Qur'an*,

[34] A precise account of the process of *mufakat*, as practised and understood in village councils, is found in Taufik Abdullah, 'Modernization in the Minangkabau World', 191. Abdullah writes: 'Mufakat, the process and the result of deliberation, is the procedure for dealing with general problems in the nagari and reviewing the existing social regulations. The power of mufakat is based not only on the legitimacy of the penghulu and other adat functionaries who participate in the process, but also on its sacral nature. The basic function of mufakat is the realization of the abstract notion of truth (*nan bana*) which is "the real king of the *nagari*." Regulations and precedents formulated by consensus are theoretically expressions of truth itself.'

and the Hadith, hence rejecting later interpretations by religious authorities in favour of the earliest Islamic texts. So *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* celebrates the values of the Islamic reform movement in West Sumatra, a movement which began in the early 1900s and prioritized a return to the *Qur'an* and early Islamic texts and their reasoned interpretation. Taufik Abdullah describes this movement:

> By the second decade of the century these young religious scholars, ulama, began to denounce traditional religious experts for relying in their judgements solely on *naql*, the established religious authorities. They argued that belief (iman) based on *taqlid* (unquestioning acceptance of religious teachers) was not valid, because the real sources of law were the Koran and hadith, the Prophetic Tradition. With this appeal to return to the original sources, the young reformers propagated *idjtihad*, the striving to attain truth by using akal (reasoning) … The purification of religion from deviations and the rejection of taqlid were seen as the first steps towards the rediscovery of the real ethics of religion … to prepare the ground for social change, in order to create a religiously based rational society.[35]

In the film, Haji Wali, played by Asrul Sani himself, begins the meeting of the progressive religious teachers regarding Halimah's rights, by quoting the opening lines of Verse 223 from 'Al Baqarah', the second Surah (chapter) of the *Qur'an*: 'Women are your fields. Go then into your fields, as you please. Do good works and fear God.' However, while the film emphasizes the momentousness of the issue of Halimah's rights, it does not show the deliberations of the *ulama* at the meeting, nor the actual grounds on which the decision in Halimah's favour is reached.

In this chapter we have examined so far two films made about late colonial West Sumatra which present differing but complementary portraits of this culturally unique and intellectually vital region within Indonesia. As a film made shortly after Indonesia achieved independence, *Harimau Tjampa* was intended to open up the possibility of an Indonesian regional culture being the subject of an Indonesian feature film. Its emphasis is therefore on the core location of the regional culture, the village *nagari*, and the traditions that could still be found there of interest to audiences at the time. *Harimau Tjampa* emphasizes traditional martial arts (and posits a close connection between them and Islam), traditional music and

[35] Ibid., 225–6.

dance, and even frequently foregrounds the distinctive uses of language in the region. *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, with its theme of women's emancipation, located in the interaction between Islamic religious teachers and conservative village communities at a time of increasing social turmoil in the 1920s, is, historically, a much more detailed film. The way in which Asrul Sani has adapted the writings of Hamka, which he clearly admired as source material for understanding West Sumatran history, shows a number of concerns he himself wished to raise. One, of course, is a reminder of colonialism. But, while constantly present, colonialism is relatively unimportant discursively in the film. What is important for Sani is women's emancipation and a woman's intellectual development, as shown by his decision not to depict Halimah as one of a number of uneducated village women but as a woman, capable of education, now seen in connection with the intellectual ferment of the time.

The second issue is Islamic reform, which Sani endorses by showing that his progressive Islamic teacher, who supports Halimah, is part of the Islamic reform movement, which returned to the *Qur'an* as its source of authority rather than using interpretations of *sharia* law by later 'religious authorities'. At the same time the film espouses *mufakat*, collective consultation, as the means by which the return to the *Qur'an* is undertaken. The film's historical relevance pertains not only to its portrait of the past, but also to the ways such a portrait constituted an intervention in the late 1970s. The film deepens a viewers' sense of the complexity of West Sumatran society, not only for its brief glimpse of the 1927 communist rising, but because it shows the interrelationship between Islam, communism and nationalism in West Sumatra in the 1920s, and, moreover, dramatizes this in 1980, when communism was anathema to the Suharto regime.

Syncretism and *Gotong Royong* in *Tjambuk Api* (1958)

Tjambuk Api ('Whipfire'), set in East Java, uses as a central motive an East Javanese tradition of whip fighting in a story with some similarities to that told in *Harimau Tjampa*: a young man is involved in avenging his father's death at the hands of an exploitative village head. In both films this quest is a *rite de passage* in which, at the climax of the film, the young man engages in martial arts combat with the village head. The film was directed

by Djayakusuma, who five years earlier had directed *Harimau Tjampa*. Despite the structural similarities in terms of basic plot, the films are very different. For one thing, there are more elements in the plot of *Tjambuk Api* than simply a revenge theme and a personal development theme: most importantly the hero attempts to improve the economic situation of his village. Moreover, Djayakusuma's second major 'regional' film in no way attempts the purity of treatment of a region accorded to Minangkabau West Sumatra in *Harimau Tjampa*. While ostensibly *Tjambuk Api* is set in a village in East Java and uses as a central motive an East Javanese tradition of whip fighting, much of its music is distinctively West Javanese, and there is at least one song in the film that is staged and sung in the manner of a love duet in Bombay popular cinema. According to Indonesian director, Ami Priyono, who admired *Tjambuk Api* very much, the underlying philosophy of the film's project was to deliberately develop a film that used features from a range of different regional areas, rather than from just one, in accordance with the Indonesian national motto, 'Unity in Diversity', which some artists in the 1950s at times saw as their role to exemplify.[36] International elements from Asian popular cinema were incorporated in *Tjambuk Api* as a way of expanding the repertoire of the film's expressiveness, giving it a popular currency, almost certainly an attempt to ensure commercial success by making it in a popular mode, but also, perhaps, to fulfil President Sukarno's dictum that nationalism should be accompanied by internationalism. The concluding scene of the film, when the conflicts have been resolved and the villagers return to work in the fields, echoes—indeed appears to quote—the concluding scene of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, made three years earlier. In contrast to *The Tiger from Tjampa*, *Tjambuk Api* is more a work of pan-Asian creative invention than an attempt to create a quasi-anthropological work in the form of a feature film.

Nevertheless, in addition to the tradition of whip fighting, the film incorporates details and traditions found in village life in parts of East Java that give the film a certain East Javanese rural authenticity. The central character, Kasan, sets out to fulfil his mother's request to green the fields, engaging his friends and other villagers in a project where they build a water wheel to irrigate the land, which is afflicted by drought. This is done as a combined effort, not in the interests or to the advantage of a single

[36] Ami Priyono, personal communication, March 1997.

individual but in accordance with the widely held rural Javanese philosophy of *gotong royong*, a philosophy of mutual support and sharing which was not only found quite widely in Javanese rural communities, but, as discussed in Chap. 2, was a core part of the philosophies of the independence movement and was adopted by Sukarno as a slogan for the nation.[37] *Gotong royong* is deliberately exemplified in the film in scenes of communal work, accompanied at one point by a well-known song, sung in such situations 'Ho Lupis Kuntul Baris' ('Heave Ho, Like Herons in a Line!'), a song which, interestingly, conceives the human group on the model of a flock of birds. Important here is the development of solidarity between Kasan and other young males in developing an irrigation scheme for the village, especially those male villagers not working for the village head.

This does not mean the portrait of village life is idealized or idyllic. In the film many of the villagers exist in endemic poverty due to poor climate, poor technology and lack of leadership. Many are seen to exist primarily on a diet of cassava, for at the opening of the film this is not a fertile village engaged in *sawah* (wet rice cultivation), but, like many villages in East Java, its fields are primarily *ladang*, agricultural fields that are not irrigated, but cultivated using slash-and-burn methods. At the same time, the villagers are forced to pay an exploitative tax to the village head, a heritage from colonial days. In this post-independence village, the practice of the village head being responsible for collecting taxes is retained, and the village head, Pak Suro, who treats the village as his personal fiefdom, even whips old people if they fail to pay the tax. Nevertheless, the extent to which village institutions are represented in the film is much less than in *Harimau Tjampa*. In *Tjambuk Api*, although there are some identifiable village traditions, there is almost no reference to religion, nor is there any religious advisor who may act as a mediator for its conflicts. It is as though the whole village is *abangan* (not strong adherents to Islam, but retaining pre-Islamic animist beliefs). Without leadership or institutions, they are abandoned to the evil designs of the village head and his henchmen, and appear to have very little idea of contemporary technology or politics. Nevertheless, this opens the way for the hero to tap latent beliefs within the village, and out of this to initiate community development projects along the lines of mutual support or *gotong royong*.

[37] John R. Bowen, 'On the Political Construction of Tradition: *Gotong Royong* in Indonesia', *Journal of Asian Studies* 45 (3), 1986, 545–61.

Whipfire is an earthy, challenging yet strangely humorous and optimistic film, directed with confidence and vigour by Djayakusuma, and expertly played by its cast, who are mainly known actors. The motif of fighting with whips is established in a brief contest shown in the pre-credit sequence of the film, and the film culminates nearly two hours later with a nocturnal whip fight contest between the young hero, Kasan, and the village head, Pak Suro, who is the village *jago* (strong man) in the use of the whip, both protagonists dressed in ceremonial costume, the contest watched by assembled villagers by the light of the full moon. Kasan only begins to learn to use the whip about halfway through the film, and he does so because he is favoured as a husband by Suro's very independent daughter, Marni, and because there is a suspicion of Suro's involvement in the death of Kasan's father many years before. The almost theatrical use of the whip is pervasive in the film, the sound of the whips cracking being present both in on-screen space and off-screen space, with Suro whipping not only villagers, but his own wife and daughter in their house, and, with his henchmen, keeping dissenting villagers in check by whipping them. The macho cracking—and actual use—of the whip in domestic situations becomes a striking metaphor for male domination, and its use on the two female members of Suro's family becomes a turning point in the film's action.

Despite the macho elements of the film, which have a tinge of absurdist humour in their presentation, the female presence in the film is strong and pervasive, and a carefully calculated element in the film, including reversals of dominant codification of women's roles, an aspect of the film of interest to film theory. For example, the stereotypical male gaze, where the woman is the object of a male look, is reversed, even in the pre-credit scene of the film.[38] In this earliest scene in the film, in which there is a whip fight between two young men, the spectators include the village head's daughter, Marni, who is sitting on a mound, conspicuously visible. One of the young men contestants smiles at her as he moves towards where she is sitting, but she turns her face and whole body away, to spurn him. A second young man, a spectator only (Kasan), suddenly becomes aware that the object of her interest is he himself, as can be gauged from the way she looks at him, and he smiles back, his smile

[38] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16 (3), 1975, 6–18 outlines the main features of this dominant coding.

being well received. The notion of the woman being a rightful initiator of the couple is inscribed here in the relay of looks. This reversal of dominant coding of gazes is then complemented in the way the narrative develops. In a later scene Marni goes to Kasan's home and leaves her ceremonial scarf (*selendang*) conspicuously in the stable for Kasan to find, the *selendang* being a token a woman gives to a man in order to indicate her serious interest and her commitment to him. So Marni's overtures to Kasan in the pre-credit sequence, indicated in the relay of gazes and her use of body language, are then augmented in subsequent scenes in terms of female initiative and female agency furthering the narrative. Just as this film has a freedom in the way in which it deploys traditions from various regions, it also has an agenda whereby women's initiative plays an important role in the film.

Kasan's mother is also an important figure in the film. In the first scene after the credits, Kasan is seen sitting in his mother's house, under a large whip—his late father's whip—that decorates the wall behind him. He indicates an interest in learning to use the whip, but his mother resists him, saying the important issue in the village is the greening of the fields. Kasan verbally disagrees with her, but, as he leaves the room, idly handles a scoop in a large water container, and later tests the use of a scoop in the river near the village, leading eventually to the construction by him and his friends of a large bamboo water wheel with numerous scoops on it, each at the end of a spoke. While Kasan disagrees with his mother in the opening scene, in fact throughout the film he implements her ideas, and the implementation of her ideas is—apart from the romance with Marni and the contest with her father, the village head—the major plot development in the film, the means by which the hero proves himself and his capacity for leadership, by implementing change in the village and persuading fellow male villagers to unite with him to form a cooperative to green the land by irrigating it.

One theme of *Tjambuk Api* is the problem of arranged marriages. Village head Suro (though not his wife) believes that the father has the right to determine the marriage partner of his daughter. This is a cause of further conflict between father and daughter, particularly because Suro chooses as Marni's life partner his leading 'yes man', his senior henchman, Karnen. On the occasion that her father whips her when she rejects Karnen as a suitor, Marnie rebels and leaves the house, seeking shelter at the home of Kasan, at a time when he and his mother are away in the fields. But the film is not a melodrama of the kind where the woman is a pathetic victim of oppression, scarcely able to defend herself, and is res-

cued by a male hero who loves her. Marni also knows how to use a whip, although she rarely uses it, and she teaches young village children the use of a whip in contests.

Unusual in this film, as well, is the authority vested in the mother. When it becomes apparent that overt conflict with Suro is unavoidable, the mother accepts Kasan's desire to learn to use the whip, a view to which she is persuaded by a large group of his friends. On the evening of the contest, the night of the full moon, she reveals a box containing Kasan's father's ceremonial fighting clothes, and ceremonially organizes Kasan's dressing in the clothes, his anointment with oil, and the presentation to him of his father's whip (Fig. 4.5). In *Tjambuk Api* the mother with her accumulated wisdom represents traditional authority, both in the dignity and wisdom with which she behaves and the way her son responds to her

Fig. 4.5 The mother presents Kasan with his late father's whip, as he prepares for the duel with the village head that is the climax of *Tjambuk Api* ('Whipfire'), set in East Java and directed in 1958 by Djayakusuma (Courtesy of the Indonesian Film Center)

throughout the film, and, towards the end of the film, in the way she is authorized to transmit her late husband's heritage. One wonders to what extent the dignity accorded to the mother in this fictional East Javanese village is culturally specific, or whether the film is provocatively presenting an unusually progressive image of women. The issue of the authority that women have in Javanese villages, and the relatively high status accorded her, was initially explored by Hildred Geertz, in her book *The Javanese Family*. Geertz not only affirmed the high status of women in rural Java, but argued that women control family finances and dominate the decision-making process.[39] Other strong female figures in the film, apart from Marni and the mother, include Suro's wife, who cannot control him but who defies him, and the frail and elderly wife of an ageing village elder, who, in a splendidly tongue-in-cheek performance, refuses to disclose to Suro's henchmen where her family's supply of cassava is hidden.

We may note a structural similarity with *Harimau Tjampa* in that, although some form of martial arts is central to the film, its use is resisted. Resistance in *Harimau Tjampa* comes from the Islamic *silat* teacher, who imposes the rules of *silat*. Resistance in the case of *Whipfire* comes from the mother. But of course a major difference with *Harimau Tjampa* is the impure mixture of regional elements in *Tjambuk Api*, which does not produce an idea of a unified or complete culture that must be faithfully followed but, rather, allusions to a range of rural traditions, mixed syncretically and existing together with allusions to other possibilities within representation, such as the staging of songs *à la* Bollywood. Here we may consider further the issue of mixing, because mixing occurs not only in terms of a diversity of traditional performance and cultural forms from different regions, but of different narrative forms and genres. One sub-genre that lies within and partially inflects *Tjambuk Api*, as noted above, is the

[39]See Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961. Geertz's work is discussed at some length in Chapter 7. Stoler, in a more nuanced discussion, qualifies the position of Geertz, arguing that historically Javanese society has always been stratified through differential access to strategic resources, and that variations in the power and status of particular women were related to the fact that women gain autonomy and economic independence through the nature and flexibility of the sources of income available to them. Nevertheless, Stoler agrees with Hildred Geertz and other anthropologists that in rural Java the 'household, as the basic unit of production and consumption, is in practice under the unequivocal authority of women'. See Ann Stoler, 'Class Structure and Female Autonomy in Rural Java', *Signs* 3 (1), 1977, 85 and passim.

sub-genre of resistance to arranged marriages, a commonly found theme in Asian melodrama. This in turn is mixed in with elements of the martial arts film. But this is a martial arts film in which the mother is a figure of authority and, additionally, the film constructs its couple on the premise that it is the young woman who decides on who should constitute the couple, and who then plays the role of initiating the couple's relationship, however quickly her initiative is then reciprocated by the male.

Made in the first decade of independence, *Tjambuk Api* is not only a symbol of the national motto 'Unity in Diversity' via its syncretic use of performance traditions and music from different parts of Java, but also supports the argument that, in an era of increasing overpopulation and concomitant landlessness, some villages in Indonesia might be developed by their young people using traditional forms of collective labour.[40] *Tjambuk Api* is possibly the most direct expression in any Indonesian feature film of the ideology of *gotong royong*. While the meaning of *gotong royong* in the context of the state ideology of *Pancasila* was briefly outlined in Chap. 2, its numerous possible uses in a village context will be outlined here. At the level of national political culture, as we have seen, it refers to a general ethos of mutual support, commonly understood as part of the definition of the nation provided by Sukarno at the conclusion of his speech on *Pancasila*. Here various institutionalized practices of reciprocal labour assistance take on the national meaning of a general spirit of selflessness.[41] In the context of Indonesian village societies, anthropologist John R. Bowen finds there are three kinds of collective work done without actual cash payment: (a) labour mobilized as a direct exchange, particularly in agricultural tasks, for example helping a neighbour in harvesting and receiving help in return, the contributions in each case carefully calculated; (b) generalized reciprocal assistance (the example Bowen gives is tasks involved in holding weddings and other ceremonies); and (c) labour mobilized on the basis of political status.[42] The terms used for these

[40]This is a view put in 1963 by the left-wing anthropologist, Ina Slamet, in a book entitled *Pokok-pokok Pembangunan Masjarakat Desa: Sebuah Pandangan Antropologi Budaja* ('Principles of Village Community Development: A Cultural-Anthropological View'), Djakarta, Bhratara, 1963, an excerpt from which is provided in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds, *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945–1965*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1970, 404–10.

[41]Bowen, 'On the Political Construction of Tradition: *Gotong Royong* in Indonesia', 545–61.

[42]Ibid., 547.

practices vary from region to region. In highland Aceh, for example, where Bowen conducted his research, discussions by villagers do preserve the distinctions between the meanings of *gotong royong* found at different cultural levels: the level of national values, the level of specific local institutions of labour exchange and the level of labour demands by the state. However, in some villages, specific local practices are pragmatically recorded in official documents in the language that satisfies the nation-state. Bowen describes the political use of the term '*gotong royong*', which became popular only in the 1940s, as an example of what Raymond Williams describes as 'selective tradition', a tradition based in a remembered past, but in the present having a political function.[43]

The last category (labour mobilized on the basis of political status) Bowen sees as historically stemming from older village institutions and practices where the community would unite to undertake major infrastructural change, in matters for instance of irrigation, as we see undertaken both voluntarily and collectively by poorer members of the community in *Tjambuk Api*. But while this last category is originally conceived as a voluntary contribution, it could easily be commandeered by a local official or used by a colonizing or invading power such as the Dutch and the Japanese, or by the nation-state.[44]

So *Tjambuk Api* affirms the practice of *gotong royong* as a form of solidarity among poor villagers, which can be used to transform the village economy. However, distinctions between an identifiable specific local practice and a national ideology are not present. The film reproduces the culturally appropriate misrecognitions discussed by Bowen, in that local practices in the film, which appear to be a form of voluntary mobilization of labour, with poor, exploited villagers acting in their own interests in defiance of the village head, also appear to be primarily expressive of the national ideal of selflessness and disinterestedness for the good of the community as a whole, an ideology addressed to the nation, at a time

[43] Ibid., 558.

[44] These distinctions as to kinds of collective unpaid labour are important due to the pervasive use of the term '*gotong royong*' not only by Sukarno but, later on, by the Suharto New Order government, where the state could oblige villagers to become involved in *gotong royong* developmental projects, known by the acronym 'Inpres Desa' (Instruksi President Desa—presidential instructions for the village), where, in return for state-supplied resources, villagers were expected to provide free labour for village infrastructural work, such as road building and irrigation repair (ibid., 553).

when national development was particularly urgent. At the same time the wider nation is barely present in the film, set entirely in a village which appears to exist in isolation, the nation and its institutions being present in the film primarily through the film's discourses about social organization, in particular the emphasis on *gotong royong* and also through the use of music from other parts of Indonesia. Nevertheless, we should remember that the earthy and spirited *Tjambuk Api* was directed by a Javanese, Djayakusuma, born and raised in the early 1920s in a Central Javanese village, and it should not be taken as representing only ideologies emanating from the centre. Nevertheless, at a time of some uncertainty over Indonesia's future, *Tjambuk Api* reaffirms core beliefs of the independence movement about the future new nation. It does so, however, in moderate terms, acceptable to the independence movement as a whole, for social change is here envisaged in traditional communitarian terms, and not along lines of revolutionary change based in communist beliefs.[45]

Regional Performance Forms Versus Modern Film Genres in *Tiga Buronan* (1957)

Tiga Buronan ('Three Fugitives') is a comedy film about three bandits harassing the citizens of a quiet Muslim village on the outskirts of Jakarta. The film's director, Nya Abbas Akup, was later to become one of the most important directors of comedies, and this film established a particular genre of comedy that others would later take up. *Tiga Buronan* makes use of performance forms from the Jakarta region, in particular *lenong Betawi*, a form of theatre developed by the Betawi community, often described

[45] In an academic context *gotong royong* was one consideration in the debate over the concept of 'shared poverty', a term promulgated by Clifford Geertz, who argued that in Java, under the pressures of colonialism and related population growth, village society, through increasingly labour-intensive cultivation and by redeploying traditional social institutions, such as communal land (which it sub-divided) and reciprocal assistance, maximized employment in a community of 'just-enoughs and not-quite-enoughs'. Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963, 97. Geertz's account of 'shared poverty' has been critiqued on the grounds that Javanese village society was more stratified than Geertz recognized. See Jennifer Alexander and Paul Alexander, 'Shared Poverty as Ideology: Agrarian Relationships in Colonial Java', *Man* 17 (4), December 1982, 597–619. Stoler concludes that 'Poverty is indeed shared, but only among the already impoverished men and women of rural Java.' See Stoler, 'Class Structure and Female Autonomy in Rural Java', 74–89.

as the original inhabitants of Jakarta, known under the Dutch as Batavia. Here Jakarta, the national capital, needs to be seen as a region in the sense that this growing national metropolis contained within it a hybrid ethnic group which, however increasingly dispersed across the city, saw itself as a relatively distinct ethnic group, with its own history, dialect, traditions and performance forms.

Batavia was established by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century—on the site of a village known as Jayakarta—as a fortified trading port from which (including surrounding areas) most of the indigenous population of Sundanese and Malays were cleared, while workers and servants were brought in from more distant islands, many initially as slaves, for example from Bali and Sulawesi, and even from the Middle East. While initially the dominant language of this non-Dutch, servant and market gardener, local and migrated population was Portuguese, over time a distinctively local version of Malay evolved as their lingua franca, and was adopted, known as *bahasa Betawi*. In the 1840s those Betawi who were still slaves were legally given their freedom, but their culture has always been one of a non-dominant group. Even in the late twentieth century Betawi communities could be identified in various forms as distinctive groupings, by their dialect and by their cultural traditions, and in Indonesia Betawi culture, particularly as popularized in the 1970s by Betawi singer and comedian Benyamin S, was seen as a vital culture of the poor, known for its earthy humour, its camaraderie and its egalitarianism. So we can say that, even in a modern megacity such as Jakarta, with a diverse professional population and powerful international and Indonesia-wide influences at work, a distinctive if small regional culture, with its own values and sense of identity (a resilient if disadvantaged settler culture), survives and is recognized and celebrated, not only by the Betawi but also by large sections of the Indonesian population. In the 1990s the longest running television series in Indonesia was the comedy television series about a Betawi family, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* ('Educated Doel'). The contribution of Betawi culture to Indonesian popular culture has been very considerable, due to its democratic ethos and demonstrative reciprocity.

Lenong Betawi is a form of lyrical, sometimes subversive, popular theatre that evolved as entertainment for the Betawi in the marketplaces of colonial Batavia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[46]

[46]See Ninuk Kleden-Probonegoro, *Teater Lenong Betawi: Studi Perbandingan Diakronik*, Jakarta, Yayasan Obor Indonesia dan Yayasan Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan, 1996.

With a mild and easy wit the film *Tiga Buronan* mixes the humour and style of this Jakarta theatrical tradition and its music, and aspects of its theatrical styles, with a plot and visual style that also bear traces of the Hollywood Western, mocking in a gentle way some of the conventions of Hollywood. So *Tiga Buronan* not only incorporates musical and theatrical performance forms of Betawi culture, but, as we shall see, it uses some of the values contained within these performance forms as way of developing cultural resistance to international genres of filmmaking.

The specific elements from *lenong Betawi* used in this film are as follows. First, the film uses a lilting lyrical *gambang kromong* song as the musical background to the opening credits, strongly establishing the tone and spirit of the film, a tone of sustained gentle irony and mockery. *Gambang kromong* evolved in the nineteenth century, incorporating elements of music from the *peranakan* Chinese communities that lived adjacent to the Betawi, mixing Javanese instruments *gambang* (traditional xylophone), *kromong* (kettle drums) and *suling* (flute) with Chinese instruments, such as the *tehyan* (two-string fiddle) and using the Chinese pentatonic scale. Its characteristic highly melodic style mixes humour, joy and, at times, irreverent allusions and mockery.[47] The opening song, which is about the bandit Mat Codet, the comic villain of the film, is sung in the *lagu lama*, old style of *gambang kromong* (pre-1930s 'old song'). Second, this older style of *gambang kromong* is used as film music subsequently for much (though not all) of the film. Third, from a dramaturgical point of view, numerous scenes in the film use protracted bantering between characters. Extensive banter as a way of representing social context and local idiom, and of developing humour and expressing resistance, is a characteristic of *lenong* theatre.[48]

Tiga Buronan is elegantly scripted and directed, and very controlled in its development of suspenseful situations and their subsequent transition to comedy and irony. The film is set in the early years of independence, when gangs of bandits still roamed the countryside, a consequence of the chaos of the years of war. The plot is simple and takes place over the space of a couple of days.

[47] Philip Yampolsky, 'Introduction' to *Music of Indonesia: Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta*: *Gambang Kromong*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1991.

[48] See the lengthy example of banter in a *lenong* play in Basoeki Koesasi, *Lenong and Si Pitung*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1992, 18–26.

Synopsis of *Tiga Buronan*

After the film's credits, villagers report to an elder of the village, Pak Haji, that the bandit, Mat Codet, recently escaped from prison, has been seen in the vicinity of the village together with two henchmen. (The name Haji, of course, signifies the respect the villagers have for the man, for it indicates he has been to Mecca.) Subsequently Codet enters the village and goes to Pak Haji's home, where, complaining that he believes that Haji had reported him to the police which resulted in his imprisonment, he attempts to extort money from Pak Haji, the extortion demand interrupted by the entrance of other family members. Subsequently Pak Haji's daughter, Ginah, runs into a young man, Maman, who has not been in the village for ten years, and she welcomes him back. Maman continues on his way to a distant part of the village where he is to stay at the home of an ageing aunt. That night the bandits steal cows and goats from the barns of villagers. The villagers lock themselves in their homes, aware of what is going on, but none of them is willing to confront the bandits. On the same evening Maman visits Pak Haji's home to talk to Ginah. Bodin, one of the bandits, enters and tries again to intimidate Pak Haji for money. There is a fight between Maman and Bodin, culminating in Bodin's humiliation as he is thrown out of the house. Codet and the bandits then decide to find Maman, and take revenge. At Pak Haji's house, Ginah and the ageing aunt protect Maman by hiding him, and the boy Yahya defends Pak Haji as Mat Codet questions and threatens him (Fig. 4.6). At this point the film follows the development of a romance between Ginah and Maman. The next day two of the bandits encounter Maman at Ginah's home and he makes them walk all the way to his aunt's home before he will return a wallet that Codet had lost the night before. A protracted comic fight ensues. Subsequently, in a *warung* young male villagers talk of the fight, boasting of what they would do with Codet, but when Codet and the bandits enter, intimidated, the young males fall silent. The bandits announce that no one is to leave the village, and the gang of bandits, enlarged by friends of Codet, begins to take it over. Maman asks that someone report this to the army. The person who runs to the next village to make the report is Ginah. The army arrives and the whole gang of bandits is captured, including Mat

Fig. 4.6 The boy Yahya struggles with the bandit, Mat Codet, as he intimidates Pak Haji, in Nya Abbas Akup's comedy *Tiga Buronan* ('Three Fugitives', 1957), set in a Betawi village on the outskirts of Jakarta in the 1950s (Courtesy of the Indonesian Film Center)

Codet. It is revealed that the former villager, Maman, is a policeman and he has come to the village to watch for Mat Codet.

How then does the film make reference to Hollywood and its genres such as the Western and the gangster film? In the opening scene of *Tiga Buronan*, when the bandits enter the main street, they go straight to the home of Pak Haji to blackmail him, and there they interrupt preparations for the circumcision of Pak Haji's grandson, Yahya, an event that is to include a *wayang golek* (wooden puppets) performance. But the way the bandits are established entering the main street is reminiscent of the classic Hollywood Western, despite the large number of children playing happily there. The positioning and framing of the characters as they enter the main street of the village, and their style of acting, mix in elements of

Hollywood just sufficiently for an audience to sense they are 'seeing double', and that this may be Indonesia, but it is also reminiscent—through elements of its staging and framing—of American cinema. Second, with regard to comic elements, in this film comedy arises from the continuous juxtaposition of the domestic and the ordinary (the children playing in the street) with the macabre or macho elements of the gangster film or the Western. But it is not only the domestic sphere, but village traditions and customs that frequently intrude upon and replace the sense of menace created by the threatening but paranoid and sentimental Mat Codet. The bullying of Haji by Codet and his two henchmen, in the opening major scene of attempted intimidation, is side-tracked by discussions with Codet of the details of the party to celebrate the circumcision of Yahya, after Codet asks Pak Haji why the house is being decorated and what they are preparing for, for Codet is a sentimental villager as well as a bandit. Here the dialogue pointedly slows down as Codet becomes absorbed in the details of the forthcoming party. The climax of this scene, an attack on Pak Haji with a machete by the ferocious henchman, Sabeni, is interrupted by the escape of a chicken about to be slaughtered for the circumcision party, and its pursuit by the young woman, Ginah, and the wide-eyed little boy, Yahya, who enter from the rear of the house. The violence of the bandits is replaced by the failed attempt to simply kill a chicken, the tone of the film changing with the entrance of these other members of the family—oblivious to what is happening to Haji—together with the fleeing chicken.

In *Tiga Buronan* we do not have the syncretic mixing of traditions from different parts of Java, as in *Tjambuk Api*, but a degree of regional cultural specificity from the Jakarta area in the performance styles deployed in the acting and in the ironic music and song, all of which is then juxtaposed with internationally known genres to subvert the endorsement of any single way of seeing, or any single dominant set of values. The main antagonist of the bandits is the young policeman, Maman. But it is not the policeman, primarily, who defeats the desperadoes. They are outwitted and outfaced by a continuously bantering octogenarian aunt, played by the ageing actress Pala Manru Bu Rohani, who a year later repeated her success in *Tjambuk Api*, playing in that film the old peasant lady who refuses to be browbeaten by village head Pak Suro's henchman. The male hero, Maman, himself only succeeds as a result of the spirited intervention of the young woman, Ginah, and of the 10-year-old boy, Yayha, who throws a plate across the room, thus distracting Codet, in the climactic scene of the film as Codet goes to shoot Maman hiding under a couch. In a way this

is a culturally specific, anti-patriarchal comedy, not only making fun of the standover men (thugs who extort by intimidation), but also reducing the status of the central male hero, without discrediting him. Moreover, the gently subversive elements of *Tiga Buronan* are not only directed at macho villains, or at heroes, but also at conservative Muslims (in Pak Haji), at the cowardice and boastfulness of villagers, and at the ethos, body language and style of staging of character in the American Western.

At the end of the film the link of this isolated village to Jakarta and to the nation is expressed, in a manner not uncharacteristic of early post-independence Indonesian cinema, through the incongruous arrival of an Indonesian paramilitary brigade—acknowledged in the film's credits as 'Brimob Jakarta Raya Corp 101' (Special Forces Mobile Brigade)—to do the final work of mopping up, after the main job of knocking out Mat Codet has been done, in effect, by the policeman's octogenarian aunt, the spirited young woman and the small boy.[49] The presence of the paramilitary unit of the police, which produces a change of tone in the film from irreverent, subversive comedy to sober patriarchal seriousness, shows that armed forces of various kinds are coming to have a more pervasive presence in Indonesia, due no doubt to the role such units had played in the revolution, the subsequent role they were playing in suppressing Darul Islam rebellions, their connections with the filmmakers and their unwillingness to completely confine their role to military matters.

This Indonesian spoof of the macho American Western—complete with main street dominated by a villain quick on the draw with his machete, but given to waxing sentimentally about *lenong* and *wayang* performances, and to discoursing at length about the need for fidelity to women, and to going into uncontrollable fits of rage—was so appreciated by the Americans that, according to reports, it was selected by the New York Asia Society to open the Museum of Modern Art retrospective of 40 years of Indonesian cinema to be held in the mid-1990s. The star of this film was the comedian Bing Slamet, who in the middle 1960s was to become a mentor for Benyamin S, and who also appears in Nya Abbas Akup's comedy *Bing Slamet, Koboi Cengeng* ('Bing Slamet, Cry-baby Cowboy', 1974), itself a model for *Benyamin Koboi Ngungsi* ('Benyamin, Refugee Cowboy', 1975). Indeed it could be said that, with *Tiga Buronan*, Nya

[49] Mobrig (Brigade Mobil) is a special operations unit of the Indonesian National Police, formed as early as 1947 to suppress military and police conflicts and even regional rebellions and possible *coups d'état*.

Abbas Akup invented a sub-genre within Indonesian cinema, the spoof of the cowboy film, but one which often used Betawi performance traditions as a contrasting context in which to develop the spoof.

If we contrast *Tiga Buronan* with *Harimau Tjampa*, it is clear that *Tiga Buronan* does not contain numerous cultural traditions, comparable with the many traditions found in the film Djayakusuma made in West Sumatra. Indeed the main elements in *Tiga Buronan* that are derived from Betawi culture are the use of *gambang kromong* instrumentation, the *lagu lama* style of song, and the use of banter in the dialogue, all found in the theatrical form *lenong Betawi*. Indeed, in interviews carried out by Klarijn Loven when researching the Betawi television series *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan*, she found that some of her interviewees disputed that the Betawi constituted a culture, saying they were better regarded as a way of life ('*gaya hidup*').[50] But in fact what constitutes the Betawi presence in *Tiga Buronan* is the ethos of the Betawi, their irreverence and egalitarianism. As we shall see, ethos is also important in the next film to be discussed, *Tjoet Nja Dhien*.

A Flag Rising above a People under Siege: *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988)

At the opening of the film *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, against a visual backdrop of the mountains of Aceh the voice of the Acehnese guerrilla band leader, Tjoet Nja' Dhien, is heard speaking—as though an ancestral spirit—of her memories of the horror of the Dutch invasion and the desecration of her homeland, and particularly of the deliberate destruction by invading Dutch forces, in 1873, of the Grand Mosque in the Acehnese capital, Banda Aceh. The film presents us not only with a set of events in this strongly Islamic region of Aceh, but with its heroine as a continuing spiritual force, reminding the audience of her place in the popular memory of many Acehnese from her time. For Tjoet 'the struggle against the infidel is integral to our faith'. For her the climax of that struggle was the period she led a guerrilla band in the mountains of Aceh after her husband was assassinated by a Dutch marksman in February 1899. In Eros Djarot and Christine Hakim's prize-winning film, *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, completed in 1988, it was important to create not only a record of Tjoet's campaign

[50] Klarijn Loven, *Watching Si Doel*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 2008, 211–12.

of resistance to the Dutch, but also a sense of the spirit and culture of the Acehnese people, from which this resistance came.

Tjoet Nja' Dhien was an Acehnese woman born in the middle of the nineteenth century, who at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the face of very considerable deprivation of food and material resources, for nearly seven years led a band of guerrillas, at one point numbering more than 300, in the mountains and jungles of Aceh (Fig. 4.7), opposing Dutch colonialism, until her capture by Dutch forces in November 1905. Tjoet was the daughter of an Acehnese woman and a Minangkabau man, Teuku Nanta Seutia, who, in the course of the *rantau* (journey abroad to broaden one's experience), had travelled to Aceh, settled and become a leader there. Both her father and her first husband had been active in early resistance to the Dutch. Her first husband, Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga, to whom she had been betrothed when she was 12 years old, had been killed while opposing

Fig. 4.7 Actress (and later, producer) Christine Hakim, as Tjoet Nja' Dhien, leading guerrillas opposing the Dutch in the mountains of Aceh in the early twentieth century in Eros Djarot's *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988) (Courtesy of Eros Djarot)

the Dutch in 1878. Her second husband, Teuku Umar, an *uleëbalang* (Acehnese chieftain), whom she had married in 1880, had from September 1893 sided with the Dutch, in order to gather weapons and to gain knowledge of Dutch military stratagems—it was not uncommon for Acehnese to change sides, for the sake of political or eventual military advantage. After Teuku Umar decided to move openly against the Dutch in February 1896, taking his force of 300 men and the plentiful arms with which the Dutch had supplied them, the family compound at Lampisang was sacked by the Dutch, and the band of guerrillas they led were forced into the jungle to continue the struggle from there. Both Teuku Umar and Tjoet Nja' Dhien are regarded in Indonesia as national heroes (*pahlawan nasional*), with an official declaration by President Sukarno in 1964, and with streets in major towns in Indonesia named after them. The narrative of Eros Djarot's epic film *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988) commences in 1896 and deals with only the later stages of Teuku Umar's life, the central figure of the film for the most part being Tjoet Nja' Dhien herself, providing a technically challenging role for the very accomplished Indonesian actress Christine Hakim, initially playing a woman some 20 years older than herself, who in the course of the film's 10-year narrative, ages very rapidly, given the harsh exigencies of the campaign to which she is committed.

While the authors of the film, the musician (and later innovative journalist and politician) Eros Djarot, and Christine Hakim, are not of Acehnese origin, their work on the film paid careful attention to Acehnese history and cultural forms, and the initial location shooting of the film was undertaken in Aceh. Perhaps most importantly, Eros sought as a key actor in the film the Acehnese *didong* poet from the Gayo Highlands, Ibrahim Kadir (*didong* is an interactive song and dance tradition of Gayo Highland villages). Kadir plays a poet who is a camp-follower, whose Acehnese poetry and songs Tjoet sees as an inspiration to herself and her guerrillas, and who himself is a pervasively charismatic presence after he joins the guerrilla band about midway through the film. The incorporation of the poet, known not by name but only as *penyair* (poet), adds vital dimensions to the film, for he embodies a living oral culture—found in song, in ritual speaking and in dance and song performance forms—which for many Acehnese, and especially those in the Gayo Highlands, has been so important even well into the

twentieth century.[51] The film is an example of how there is no single way of embodying local or regional culture and cultural resistance in a film, and each film varies in its approach. In the case of *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, because the protagonists in the film are people displaced from their homes and local communities, and always on the move, involved in a protracted, cruel and exhausting war, the cultural features of the film, its regional specificity, is embodied in the film, not always directly, but in subtle ways, like a flag glimpsed rising above a people who are under siege and often hidden.

The Aceh War, which lasted nearly 40 years, had commenced with the Dutch invasion in 1873 of the regional capital, Banda Aceh. The Sultanate of Aceh over the previous two centuries had been one of the most powerful sultanates in that part of South East Asia. In the second half of the nineteenth century Dutch policy determined that, in order to counter the emerging threat of British dominance in South East Asia, with the British now in Malaya as well as in Singapore, they should make Aceh their colony. The film, many of its early and later scenes swathed in darkness, does portray some of the butchery of this protracted war. Indeed there are two versions of the film, a version running 127 minutes, for general release, and a version running about 107 minutes, the version shown at Cannes. This second version cuts out some of the more protracted battle scenes, regarded as indispensable by those in Indonesia who funded the film. But clearly, while not concentrating primarily on violence, but on courage and endurance, and on the dynamics of loyalty and betrayal, both versions insist on showing the true horrors of colonialism, including scenes of the bullying, terrorizing and murder of villagers and their children by Dutch forces. In 1904, in their attempt to finally dominate all parts of Aceh, the Dutch invaded the Gayo Highlands in Central Aceh, and there, over a three-week period, their forces perpetrated three massacres of innocent villagers sheltering in wooden defensive forts. The massacre of 561 villagers (including 189 women and 59 children) at Kuto Reh in the Gayo Highlands in June 1904 is reconstructed in the film, although the film shows only its conclusion, and from a distance. Horrifying photographs were taken by the Dutch military of the aftermath of this massacre, and

[51] John R. Bowen has written of these oral cultural forms in his *Sumatran Poetry and Politics: Gayo History, 1900–1989*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1991, particularly in Chapter 7: 'Authoritative Maxims and Ritual Speaking', and Chapter 8: 'Poetry and Contest: 1900–1945'.

these photographs, still held in archives in Holland, show Dutch forces, comprising both Dutch commanding officers and Indonesian soldiers enlisted from other islands in the archipelago, posing before the bodies, as though they are trophies.[52] For this scene the film uses as a model these notorious surviving Dutch photographs showing the aftermath of the massacre. But in fact it is not only in these scenes but throughout—with its sombre orange and sepia tones, its frequent scenes set in the darkness of forest or of night, and its rain-soaked characters and landscapes—that the film emulates much of the surviving imagery from this period. Two other massacres of similar numbers of people occurred in the Gayo Highlands within three weeks of the massacre at Kuto Reh.[53] At one point in her campaign Tjoet and her band of guerrillas had sought refuge in these same Gayo Highlands, as the Dutch tightened their control over the whole of Aceh.

Many scenes in the film are relatively short and matter of fact, detailing political circumstances and basic tensions within and between the different groups. The film unobtrusively but systematically sketches in a number of key features of the politics of the time: the career politics of the Dutch military; the alliances between the Dutch and some of the *uleëbalang*, one of whom, Teuku Leubeh, betrays Teuku Umar to the Dutch military, resulting in Umar's assassination. The film also shows the resistance by some citizens who support Tjoet's campaign while they can, by organizing regular supplies to sustain her band; and the internal tensions and temptations within Umar and Tjoet's own guerrilla band, with the Dutch attempting to blackmail or bribe members of the band to betray its whereabouts. Patterns of betrayal and retribution are repeated throughout the film. On the other hand, this pattern of betrayal and retribution is offset in

[52]These photographs were quite widely known, appearing in a book published in Amsterdam the year after the campaign, by commanding officer Van Daalen's adjutant, Kempees. See J.C.J. Kempees, *De tocht van Overste van Daalen door de Gajoō-, Alas- en Bataklanden, 8 Februari tot 23 Juli 1904*, Amsterdam, J.C. Dalmeijer, 1905. See also Jean Gelman Taylor 2011, 'Aceh Histories in the KITLV Images Archive', in R. Michael Feener, Patrick Day and Anthony Reid, eds, *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 2011, 199–239.

[53]The total number killed in attacks on three defensive forts over this three-week period in June 1904 was some 1647 Acehnese. For details of these massacres and of the June 1904 campaign as a whole, see M.H. Gayo, *Perang Gayo-Alas Melawan Kolonialis Belanda*, Jakarta, Balai Pustaka, 1983, 192–216.

the film by examples of exceptional loyalty. Tjoet's closest female associate (apart from her daughter), her assistant, Nja' Bantu, for a time acts as a shadow warrior or surrogate for the aging Tjoet in campaigns, deliberately exposing herself to view in battle, until she is killed in a confrontation with the Dutch, who are made to think the distant figure they are targeting with their cannons is Tjoet herself.

The film particularly emphasizes the commercial side of the war, with repeated statements by characters that the war is over money and that people can be bought. We see Tjoet negotiating with a Portuguese trader for arms; the trader is also selling arms to the Dutch. For the trader, providing arms to both sides means the war will be protracted and his trade can continue. Historians and anthropologists maintain that, overall, the Acehnese chieftains were basically traders, who controlled the flow of goods through the areas they governed; their income derived from the taxes they imposed, and their power from the number of retainers they could thus employ. Many of the *uleëbalang* found that the presence of the Dutch increased their capacity for trade, leading to betrayal and treachery towards their own people. Sustained support for the anti-colonial resistance therefore became the domain of Islamic leaders, the *ulama*.[54] A policy advocating that the Dutch ally themselves with the *uleëbalang* was recommended by the Islamic scholar appointed in 1898 to advise the Dutch army, Snouck Hurgronje. Siegel argues that it was this strongly enforced dual policy of supporting *uleëbalang* who pledged their allegiance to the Dutch, and suppressing the *ulama* by force, that finally led to the decline of opposition.

The social background of the war and its course are thus detailed in numerous, relatively short, succinct scenes. At the same time, the sense that the film is imbued with the consciousness of Tjoet herself is created, as we have seen, in its opening scene where her voice speaks of her memories of the war, and this sense of her underlying presence as a spiritual leader is continued in the numerous dialogues that Tjoet has with her family, for example counselling her daughter, Tjoet Gambang, about their future, after the death of Teuku Umar, or consulting with her advisors. Despite her fervent opposition to the Dutch presence, she allows a captured Dutch soldier to go free, on condition

[54]There is a particularly lucid account of the history of these social arrangements (involving significant divisions between the *uleëbalang*, the *ulama*, the peasants and the Sultan and his group) in James Siegel, *The Rope of God*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1969, 1–14.

that he report back to the Dutch authorities the passionate commitment of her and her followers. The man is later shot dead by a superior, in a fit of rage, angry that the young officer will not disclose Tjoet's whereabouts.

Like *Harimau Tjampa*, the film set in the Minangkabau highlands, *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* uses poetic maxims—of the kind favoured in these Sumatran societies—to concentrate the essence of its perceptions. So Tjoet tells her followers to: 'Shine in the night / Be invisible by day', as their stratagem for continuing the campaign. Later in the film Tjoet's perceptiveness and prescience in sensing what is happening, and her capacity still to capture the imaginations of the people, despite being nearly blind, is summed up by her lieutenant, Pang Laot: 'You touch with your feelings, and see with your thoughts.' Rather than the film succumbing to a pervasive ethos of military and guerrilla conflict, the culture of Aceh, its songs and its poetry of great verbal beauty, with its ecstasies and sadness, are repeatedly brought into the film by the presence of Tjoet herself, and also by the presence in Tjoet's guerrilla band of the poet and bard, known in the film only as the poet, who communicates his ideas to both Tjoet and her daughter, but who also has prescience – as a witness to history. At one point the poet cries out his disappointment, in a lament that echoes across the hills to the mountains. This song of lament is then picked up in Idris Sardi's orchestral music for the film. Of Idris Sardi's music for the film as a whole, the Indonesian ethnomusicologist Sumarsam has written: 'Much of the music for *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* … infuses a sense of an Islamic modality—a reminder of a regional cultural space where Islam was embraced deeply.'[55] While the song of lament is sung by the male poet in *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, lament songs, accompanied by dances, have for hundreds of years been performed by women in Western (and also Southern) Aceh, Tjoet Nja' Dhien's home region. Margaret Kartomi writes:

> Besides *phô*, which involved dirges and dances in a circle around a coffin (Siegel 1979, 147), the lament culture consisted of weeping songs (*ratapan*) by professional female mourners at funerals and the stylistically similar 'crying laments for a palm tree' (I. *ratap tangis enau*) to extract the maximum

[55] Sumarsam, 'Music in Indonesian Historical Films: Reading *November 1828*', in Mark Slobin, ed., *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2008, 220.

> yield of palm sugar from the tree. Fisherfolk at sea sang sea laments (*dendang laui'*) loudly, at high pitch, and with elaborate melodic ornamentation so that their voices would carry over water; they sang despondently about the size of their catch if it was small, or about longing, loneliness or fear at times of danger. This style, which is still extant, has become typical of most lament singing right along Sumatra's west coast …[56]

It is this kind of music that pervades *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, particularly in the incantations of the *penyair*. In colonial times performances of *phô* might include a sung-story which contained criticisms of the Dutch or mourning for the deaths of Teuku Umar and Tjoet Nja' Dhien.[57] One might suggest that the whole of Eros Djarot's film is in fact a lament for Tjoet Nja' Dhien.

At the end Tjoet is betrayed by her well-meaning deputy, the benign and compassionate Pang Laot, who fears that her campaign will be unproductive, and she herself no longer able to sustain it. Tjoet's own daughter, Gambang, is not captured but survives another five years as a guerrilla fighter before being killed. The film *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* ends with a shot of the captured Tjoet being carried away in a palanquin in the first stage of her journey, which would end in her exile. One of the conditions that Pang Laot had exacted from the Dutch for revealing her whereabouts was that after her arrest she would be treated well and never removed from her people. However, due to her continuing popularity with the Acehnese, who made pilgrimages to visit her under house arrest, and the danger her presence posed for the continuing domination by the Dutch of Aceh, a year later, in December 1906, the Dutch exiled her to Java. She died in Sumedang, West Java, in November 1908.

The Region within the Nation-state and a Globalizing World: *Surat Untuk Bidadari* (1993)

An important innovative regional film made late during the New Order period is Garin Nugroho's *Surat Untuk Bidadari* (given the English title 'Letter for an Angel' but better translated as 'Letter for a Wood Nymph'), a film set on the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia, an island

[56] Margaret Kartomi, *Musical Journeys in Sumatra*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield, University of Illinois Press, 2012, 294–5. Kartomi also notes that 'Many myths along Sumatra's west coast are tragic in content', ibid., 353.

[57] Ibid., 304.

of 11,000 square kilometres located 250 kilometres to the east of Bali, with a population of about 600,000 people. Sumba is renowned for its surviving vestiges of a megalithic culture, not only pre-Islamic but pre-Hindu-Buddhist. The selection of Sumba is a significant departure for the Indonesian regional film, for even by the 1990s few Indonesian films had been made outside of Java, Bali and Sumatra. The predominance of Sumatra as subject and location of the regional film, apparent in the analyses of films in this chapter, is partly due to the important role played by Sumatrans in the early film industry. Although by the 1970s and 1980s there were significant directors from Bali and Sulawesi working in Jakarta, none had made a film in his home region.

Nugroho's Sumba film is innovative in the context of the Indonesian regional film in a number of important ways.[58] First, it in no way views Sumba as an isolated untouched regional culture, but sees it as affected by the apparatuses of the nation-state, in the throes of the Suharto New Order period, and its people not unaffected by the presence and discourses of modern media, with its icons and superstars of both popular music and international politics, and its fashion and design cults and new technology. Accepting the challenge to present this kind of view of the region resulted in a film that broke the mould of the Indonesian regional film. Rather than representing a regional culture in terms which engage only with its own cultural specificity, which to some extent was Djayakusuma's project in *Harimau Tjampa*, 40 years later Nugroho, in *Surat Untuk Bidadari*, deliberately engages with the way in which regional cultures almost anywhere in the world today are impacted and inflected by both the nation and by global mass culture. Sen points out how unusual it was for this film to be made during the New Order period, and the incongruity that such a prize-winning but critical film should be funded by the State Film Production Company (PPFN) and by the newly established children's television channel, TPI (Indonesian Educational Television), a channel owned by a branch of the Suharto family.[59]

[58] For discussion of the early films of Garin Nugroho, in which the material in my discussion here is more fully contextualized, see David Hanan, 'Garin Nugroho: Refusing the Stereotype—Challenges Posed by Indonesia's Filmmaker of the 1990s', in Philip Cheah et al., eds, *And the Moon Dances: The Films of Garin*, Yogyakarta, PT Bentang Pustaka, 2004, 144–83.

[59] Krishna Sen and David T. Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, 155. The film received funding due to the international success of Nugroho's first feature, *Cinta dalam Sepotong Roti* ('Love on a Slice of Bread', 1991).

Filmed in villages in eastern Sumba in late 1992 and early 1993, the film uses a combination of local people and some actors from Jakarta and Java. It also, in quite graphic ways, integrates documentary footage into its narrative, and demands of its actors that they participate in actual Sumbanese rituals and ceremonies. In the pre-credit sequence Nugroho provides footage of funeral stones being dragged over many miles in a megalithic burial ritual, and then, in the first scene of the film, starts his narrative with shots of a fashion advertising unit from Jakarta—carrying dummies—encountering local villagers, by the roadside, whom they immediately want to photograph within the Sumbanese landscape, alongside the dummies. In terms of formal analysis, the sense of collision between conflicting elements is created through the juxtaposition of quite different situations in the film, as though from different time spheres, both within individual shots and between shots, a method that in subtle and new ways echoes Eisenstein's ideas of the centrality of collision between elements within a film.

Another way in which *Surat Untuk Bidadari* breaks the mould of the regional film is that it does not use a locally derived story as the basis of its narrative, but rather eclectically draws elements from stories from different continents: French existentialist writer Marcel Camus' *The Outsider*, Mexican writer Gregorio Lopez' *Letter to God* and Chinese writer Lao Hsing's *A Village Boy Leaves School*, these global sources provocatively announced in the film's credits. This quite ostentatious use of three foreign sources, made perfectly apparent in the film's opening credits, marks a seemingly conscious break from the Djayakusuma-style regional film, where the story told arises from within the culture, and is a means of exemplifying key features of the culture itself. Here the use of three different sources for the story, all of them from outside the culture, is a way of foregrounding—not so much the use of the camera, but—the story as a construction, deploying a postmodern stratagem even as the film engages with a pre-modern, traditional society, undergoing 'modernization', and even though the film's location photography and use of sound creates a vibrant and realistic sense of Sumba, full of the excited cries of growing children and sounds of traditional rituals. The choice of music in the film underlines the eclectic and disjunctive nature of the film's stratagems. The film uses chanting and other forms of indigenous music from eastern Sumba, but these cries, chants and music are echoed and developed in turn by the modern Western electronic music of Tony Prabowo, composer for the film, creating a sense of the central protagonist's alienation and estrangement from the situation he is in, and possibly even from his own culture and society.

One of the appeals of this film is that at its centre is a questioning child, Lewa, an 11-year-old 'Sumbanese' boy. In 1993, few regional films had used a child as their central subject, though friends of Nugroho had begun to make children's television series, with children in different regions presented each week, as their leading characters. The boy Lewa is seen early in the film delivering a copy of a weekly magazine to his schoolteacher. He wants to know why Gorbachev, on the cover, with a hand over one eye, looks so confused: '*Pahlawan kok bingung!*' ('A hero, but he looks so confused!'). Lewa goes on to ask a lot of other questions. He rejects the school books he is given for learning the Indonesian language, saying that the picture used to illustrate the Indonesian word '*ibu*' (mother) is not a picture of his mother—the pictures of mothers and fathers in this school book are pictures of people with Javanese clothes and hairstyles. Lewa, whose mother died years before in a bus accident and whose father is soon to be killed in a dispute over land (Fig. 4.8), adopts a picture of the pop star, Madonna, as his mother. His only friends are a young man, Malaria

Fig. 4.8 Lewa prepares to take a photograph (using an instamatic camera) of the corpse of his father, ceremonially adorned, in Garin Nugroho's *Surat Untuk Bidadari* ('Letter for a Wood Nymph', 1993), filmed on Sumba island in Eastern Indonesia (Courtesy of Garin Nugroho)

Tua (Old Malaria), whose brain has been affected by bouts of malaria, his schoolteacher who answers his questions, and a Sumbanese woman, Berlian Merah. Malaria Tua and Lewa have a hideout, the cabin of an old passenger aircraft abandoned near the sea, where they perform rituals and share ideas. Quite early in the film there is a shot where Malaria Tua and Berlian Merah, both featured in the landscape together with Lewa, disappear in two slow dissolves, the moment accompanied by disturbing electronic music, as Malaria Tua tunes his portable radio to international news in English (the news is about incidents involving Hindu fundamentalists desecrating a mosque in Ayodhya in northern India).

In an attempt to resolve some of the questions he faces, Lewa writes a letter to a *bidadari* (wood nymph) and this letter is reciprocated through the intercession of the postman, who delivers the letter to his schoolteacher, who writes in reply. At one point Lewa is given a Polaroid camera by a member of the visiting fashion photographic unit, and he later creates havoc in his community by photographing the breasts of a young girl from a neighbouring village—the girl is not wearing a top. Lewa, now a parentless child, whose only close companions are a horse, the young man suffering from an advanced stage of recurrent malaria, and his female schoolteacher, continues the feud with the killer of his father, Kuda Liar, and after (half-accidentally) killing him with a bow and arrow, is incarcerated, after a trial, in a corrective school, despite being defended by the village chief (played with some pride by Oembu Ngikku, the real village chief of the area of Pau) in an Indonesian state court located on Sumba. The killer, 'Kuda Liar' (Wild Horse), an exceptionally sadistic standover man (played by the Javanese actor, Adi Kurdi), is represented as a Sumbanese who idolizes Elvis, and is associated through some photographs he has on his caravan with the influence of Jakarta, which he has visited and which is represented as having had a significant influence upon him.

The film is pervaded by a sense of the importance of asking questions, and also by a feeling of the importance of the nurturing of the young, as exemplified in the figure of the parentless but spirited Lewa, attempting to find parent figures and to resolve his confusion, some of which is connected with adolescence. But Lewa himself is not only parentless, but also apart from this society. Thus he exists as a kind of isolated modern consciousness, for reasons of personal context unsatisfied with the village world, on the edge of adolescence and the knowledge of exploitation, and in a state of restlessness and moral hyperactivity, looking out from Sumba to a wider world, which he only partially knows.

The specificity and uniqueness of Sumbanese culture, and the provocative nature of the film require that some specialist expertise be applied in assessing the film's relation to Sumbanese culture. An article on the film by the anthropologist, Janet Hoskins, who has written a major study of different modalities of time among the Kodi people in West Sumba, provides answers to questions discerning viewers may raise.[60] Hoskins spent more than three years in Sumba over the period 1979 to 1988. Hoskins describes the film as an 'elusive mixture of "nationalist" realism and "magical" postmodernism', seeing it as productively playing out the ironies of the confrontation between the traditional and the modern, and crossing the boundaries between the ethnographic and the narrative film. Hoskins points out that the Christian notion of an 'angel' does not encompass the implications of the Indonesian word '*bidadari*', which refers really to a wood nymph or sylph with erotic connotations, rather than to the sexless notion of angels. This knowledge illuminates some of the more challenging aspects of the film, such as the scene late in the film in which Berlian Merah nurtures the disturbed Lewa by letting him suckle at her breasts, hence combining the erotic and the maternal. Hoskins also confirms that the representation of Sumbanese rituals and ceremonies in the film (and their centrality to a village such as Pau) is accurate. For Hoskins the film is distinctive in its attempt to reflect the eclectic oppositions of Sumbanese life.

But Hoskins the professional anthropologist also raises questions about the film. She points out that although 50 % of Sumbanese still practise Merapau megalithic rituals, the island has undergone a substantial conversion to Christianity, with 60 % of Sumbanese registered as either independent Protestant or Catholic by the 1990s.[61] The suppression of this fact in the film allows it to accentuate the contrast between the megalithic and the postmodern, a contrast that distorts the broad picture of Sumbanese life. Furthermore, while the film integrates aspects of traditional Sumbanese

[60] Janet Hoskins, '*Letter for an Angel*: An Indonesian Film on the Ironies of Modernity in Marginal Areas', *Visual Anthropology Review* 12 (1), 1996, 67–73. See also Hoskins' study of different time dimensions within Kodi society in West Sumba: Janet Hoskins, *The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives on Calendars, History, and Exchange*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993.

[61] After 1965 the incoming Suharto New Order government decreed that if a citizen wished to be employed by the government they had to be registered as member of one of the five officially recognized religions (Islam, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic or Protestant), while the Sumbanese Merapau religion was not officially recognized by the national government.

culture, such as ritual horse slaying, it does little to explain them, not bothering to indicate that the reason the dead man's horse is slain at his funeral is because the horse is regarded as the means by which the soul of the dead Sumbanese transits to the other world. Additionally, the film includes a scene where the villain sends a message that he will give a buffalo as a way of proposing to a woman, the film perhaps implying this is simply a financial transaction. But in Sumba, while there may be a payment, marriages are organized with family approval and women cannot simply be bought.

Hoskins also objects to some of the violence in the film, on the grounds that, although Sumba is a quite violent society, the violence perpetrated by the villain, Kuda Liar (two murders, a rape, involvement in torture), would not be possible in Sumba, a small society where the perpetrators of crimes are quickly identified and where retribution would be quickly carried out by relatives of the dead man, or the crime subjected to community sanctions. In Sumba, Hoskins affirms, while bloodshed is still seen as part of an honourable response to murder, this is part of a system of traditional social regulation. Moreover, for Hoskins, the violence in *Surat Untuk Bidadari* is too American.[62] Hoskins also argues, on cultural grounds, that the tribal war precipitated by Lewa's photographing the breasts of a pubescent girl from a neighbouring village is not credible, as, again, there exist in Sumba mechanisms for settling disputes that would have avoided such a consequence. Nugroho has stated in an interview that the tribal war was suggested by his Sumbanese associates, but this seems to be a case of the Sumbanese proposing a consequence that would be a suitable development for a film rather than one they would accept in their own society, a risk undoubtedly precipitated by Nugroho's participatory methods. Nevertheless, there was a kind of precedent for this scene of tribal war. In Sumba there is a pre-harvest fertility ritual, known as *pasola*, a traditional fight with spears involving hundreds of horsemen, resulting

[62] Reviews of the film have not been uniformly enthusiastic. Tony Rayns wrote in the *Time Out Film Guide*: 'Nugroho is the one director in Indonesian cinema who is challenging taboos and opening up new ground, and so it's a pity that his movies lack formal rigour and lapse so easily into vacuous pictorialism … Nugroho focuses on a tribal community caught between tradition and strong influences from outside, but loses grip when he drifts off into dime-store surrealist interludes, indulges in cheap-shot satire and gets fixated on colourful/bloody ethnic rituals.' See *Time Out Film Guide*, 'Letter for an Angel', London, 2006, 659; also at http://www.timeout.com/london/film/letter-for-an-angel, accessed 29 February 2016.

in serious injuries, and sometimes even deaths—similar to what we see in the film.[63] The context for the *pasola* in the film is not a ritualized event organized to celebrate an occasion, but a case of retribution by one village for a perceived insult by a junior member of another village.

Within this deliberate juxtaposition of the indigenous and the global, of the collective communal consciousness and the isolated individual consciousness, a number of oddities occur, all of them related to the problematic of the encounter between the non-indigenous filmmaker and the indigenous subject, even while this problematic is also very much the subject of the film. While Lewa protests about the way in which Javanese are being used as role models for Sumbanese, Lewa (which is the name of the largest traditional domain in Sumba) is himself played by a Javanese boy, Windi Prasetyo Utomo, admittedly in a performance of great character. The two classroom scenes where Lewa protests are important in the film, for Nugroho, of necessity, is using allegory to highlight the power of the apparatuses of education of the New Order Indonesian nation-state to create and circulate homogenized images of what it is to be an Indonesian, namely to be a Javanese. That this kind of representation is at the expense of the Sumbanese, and of any non-Javanese regional society, is underlined by Nugroho, for Lewa makes his protest twice, in two very similar scenes. The extent to which the New Order State was prioritizing Java and turning the whole of Indonesia into Java (*kejawanisasi*) was a sore point in Indonesia at the time. Yet, by using a Javanese boy to enact this scene, the film appears to be going against some of the principles of representation that it has set itself, namely that indigenous figures be represented by indigenous people. In contrast, in Nugroho's West Papuan feature, *Bird-Man Tale* (2002), the central figure is played by an indigenous actor, an adolescent West Papuan boy. In *Surat Untuk Bidadari*, as Janet Hoskins points, the consequence of using a Javanese boy to play a key Sumbanese protagonist, is that the film sometimes moves in the course of one conversation between the Sumbanese language and the Indonesian national language, so for example we find Lewa speaking Indonesian to his father, and his father replying in Sumbanese, a move precipitated by the linguistic

[63] For discussions of *pasola*, including recent developments as a result of tourism, see two articles by Janet Hoskins: 'Equal and Unequal Contests: Men, Horses and Gods in Sumba's Pasola', *Cosmos: Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society* 4 (1), 1990, 29–60; 'Predatory Voyeurs: Tourists and "Tribal Violence" in Remote Indonesia', *American Ethnologist* 29 (4), November 2002, 603–30.

abilities of the actors rather than by different language uses characteristic of the society.

While the film deliberately engages with the positive influence of outside cultures, seeing something defiant in the way that Lewa adopts Madonna as his mother, the film also appears to be making some statement about the degree to which the Sumbanese are negatively influenced by outside cultures (for example in the character of Kuda Liar), yet some have reported that the way in which many Indonesian regional cultures (including the discos in Sumba) engage syncretically with foreign musical forms, shows great vitality, inventiveness and even some degree of cultural resistance.[64] This is not clearly displayed in the film. Indeed, if the film has a concern about negative influences, it might be argued that Nugroho, in this film and in his next, is himself excessively influenced by recent developments in world cinema (including the films of Quentin Tarantino, popular at the time), and that the problematic of unassimilated influence, which appears to be alleged in relation to the Sumbanese (certainly in the case of Kuda Liar) can also, though in different ways, be applied to Nugroho himself.

Nevertheless, even in the way influences permeate it, *Surat Untuk Bidadari* is a striking and in many ways original film, one of the greatest virtues of which is the debate that it can provoke after any screening, and this debate is usually about the way the film is involved in the very issues it foregrounds. Objections to the film on the grounds of consistency of argument, or of being trapped by the very problematic that it itself propounds, may very well be beside the point. Ignoring consistency and defying traditions of stylistic homogeneity in the regional film, *Surat Untuk Bidadari* incorporates recalcitrant elements that resist easy assimilation. These elements include elements of Western society that are normally excluded from a regional film, together with elements of the society of Sumba, which the Javanese director himself has not fully assimilated. And, of course, the film also includes within its depiction of the current situation of a regional culture a critical portrait of the power of the Indonesian state. The very foregrounding of all these elements in a state of conflict breaks down any simple view of cinematic representation as inherently realistic or balanced. In contrast, anyone who watched Indonesian television during

[64] Personal communication (June 1994) from Australian film scholar, Deb Verhoeven, who visited Sumba shortly before the film was made in 1993.

the New Order period, and particularly the domestic news programme, *Siaran Berita*, emanating from the state broadcaster, Televisi Republic Indonesia, a programme that, at the time the film was made, was broadcast simultaneously on all commercial television stations in Indonesia at 7.00 in the evening, will understand how homogenized a picture of the Indonesian state was presented via its official national media during that period.[65] In contrast, by including recalcitrant elements and showing that the iconography in the society is in a state of conflict, and that there are numerous contradictions between the symbols and the realities, Nugroho, in a spirit of cheerful provocation, succeeds in doing what Godard and Straub achieved in a number of their films, that is, putting the viewer into a position of discomfort, if not crisis. The provocative highlighting of such contradictions—in a nation-state as homogenized as the Suharto-ruled Indonesian state—is a worthwhile project. *Surat Untuk Bidadari*, despite its own contradictions, has a startling dynamism, a richness of imagery and, at times, an unusual emotional complexity.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined six films made in or about regional areas in Indonesia, between 1953 and 1993. What is enlightening about these films made in and about regions is the specific and creative ways in which they dramatize how particular regions conceive of themselves, and take some pride in the relative uniqueness of their cultural forms and their forms of dialogue and social organization. But there are also considerable differences in the way this is done. In *Harimau Tjampa*, with its quest for authenticity, the director systematically incorporates as many aspects of the regional culture as possible: unique features of the regional language such as aphorisms; specific forms of martial arts taught in a religious school; traditional music; different kinds of local song and dance and related performance arts; documentary footage which, 60 years after the film was made, is of even greater interest; a plot based around the affirmation of cultural

[65] In the New Order period television news was largely 'developmental news' (news for a 'developing society'), emphasizing what the government was doing for the people rather than what was actually happening in the society. For a variety of approaches to state television during the Suharto New Order regime, see Philip Kitley, *Television, Nation and Culture in Indonesia*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press 2000; Krishna Sen and David Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Oxford and Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2000.

values, together with an implicit portrait of specific limitations of the rural society produced by the social structure of the late colonial period with the power accorded by the Dutch to village heads. On the other hand, in *Tiga Buronan* the incorporation of specific cultural and social forms is less in evidence, limited to one particular kind of music used by the culture, together with sustained banter in the dialogue. But *Tiga Buronan*, as I have argued, is imbued with the ethos of the Betawi culture, and it is the spirit of the film that facilitates its irreverent and playful engagement with international film codes, such as those found in the American Western, and at the same time identifies the culture of the Betawi people, and their unique capacity for humour, as irreverent, anti-authoritarian, demonstrative and egalitarian.

While Indonesian national television has tended to present regional cultures primarily in terms of their performance forms and local ceremonies, these films show that it is not only the performance forms that are central to the culture. The representation of the cultures in at least half of the films discussed addresses both social structure and—to return to terms used by Deleuze—the kinds of conversation that are possible and the forms that they take in producing sociality. This is most notable in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, which, in addition to portraying aspects of the intellectual history of West Sumatra, places an emphasis on how decisions are best made within a community, via *mufakat*. Similar kinds of group deliberation are found in some of the other films, whether it is those designed to reduce violence in a pre-state society, as in *Harimau Tjampa*, or philosophies of mutual support, such as *gotong royong*, as in *Tjambuk Api*.

The two last mentioned terms, '*gotong royong*' and '*mufakat*', whatever their various roles at the village level across the archipelago, are of course terms that were adopted by the national political elite at the time of independence, as part of the national philosophy. In this sense both *Tjambuk Api* and *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* partake, to varying degrees, in national as well as regional discourses. To some extent this is true of any of the historical films discussed, where proto-nationalist resistance to colonialism in regional areas might be appropriated into nationalist discourses about the identity of a nation that fought for its independence. However, in these films discourses about regions cannot be completely assimilated to discourses of the nation. *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* was suppressed for a time in Indonesia because the strength of its commitment to Islamic history in West Sumatra was seen as a threat by the Suharto regime, at that

time wary of political Islam. The makers of *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, produced at a time of Acehnese resistance to Jakarta, were conscious that Tjoet's resistance was one not calling for the nation of Indonesia, but demanding freedom for its people from the imposition of Dutch rule. The uniqueness of *Surat Untuk Bidadari* is that this film, while it is about a regional area, and local culture and politics, explicitly addresses the problems of national hegemony, and of varieties of state power and influence in a regional area.

Ravi Vasudevan has suggested that 'the framing of cultural specificities, as in the assertion of regional cultures … may sidestep and even contest a national framing of cultural heritages'. *Surat Untuk Bidadari* certainly contests a national framing of cultural heritages. The case of *Tiga Buronan* is particularly relevant in this regard. This film, with its characteristic Betawi irreverence, presents an ethos hardly compatible with national solemnities. Yet if the Betawi are a marginalized sub-culture in Jakarta, it was a sub-culture later adopted by the masses of Indonesian people in the 1970s through the popularity of Betawi singer Benyamin S, who celebrated the lives of the Jakarta poor in his numerous songs and films. As noted in Chap. 3, the longest running television series of the 1990s was the Betawi series *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan*. This is evidence that, in a modern media age, a marginal regional sub-culture can become celebrated as part of national popular culture, but this in turn is not to be identified with a national framing of cultural heritages, but to a degree is a national popular choice.

Indeed, the whole issue of what a 'national culture' is—certainly in Indonesia—is highly problematic. Karl Heider has explored ways in which Indonesian films might be beginning to express the national culture of the new nation. Heider's second major principle of the national culture—derived from the particular set of films he analyses—is that a characteristic of Indonesian national culture is that it conceives of its stories in terms of polarities of order and disorder, and there are no really evil characters to be punished, in contrast to the West, which conceives of its stories in polarities of good and evil. It should be noted as one conclusion to this chapter that this second fundamental principle of Heider's is not in evidence in the films analysed in this chapter, where all the films make moral judgements about their characters, and perhaps only in one, *Tjambuk Api*, is there a return to order without the villain being punished—but he, the village head, is also the father of the film's heroine. Nevertheless, Heider's first principle, the importance of the group as opposed to the individual, is upheld to varying degrees by most of the films discussed in this chapter.

In the next chapter the importance of the group is highlighted in an exploration of body language in some films made by the avant-garde in Indonesia, two of these films being made in regional areas. This is then followed by a chapter exploring body language in wall reliefs, paintings and popular narrative films, the selection of items analysed spanning a period of more than a thousand years. In these two chapters, using visual evidence rather than stories, it is argued that a major aspect of the cultural specificity of Indonesia lies not only in local customs and customary law, but in a body language of group identity that is not widely found in the same way in Europe, for example, but which, with some degree of variation is found across the Indonesian archipelago. In this sense, the cultural specificity I am talking about might be seen as pre-national, even though it is found widely in the Indonesian nation.

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CHAPTER 5

Group Body Language in Performance Art, Films and Dance by the Indonesian Avant-Garde

> Incarnation is not a transcendental operation of a subject that is situated in the midst of the world it represents to itself; the sensible experience of the body is already and from the start incarnate. The sensible—maternity, vulnerability, apprehension—binds the node of incarnation into a plot larger than the apperception of self. In this plot I am bound to others before being tied to my body.
>
> Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being: Or, Beyond Essence*, 76

Introduction

In this chapter I explore Indonesian body language as it has been represented in some remarkable Indonesian avant-garde films—including one based on a performance event—directed by three Indonesian directors whose work is known for its careful and very conscious handling of *mise en scène*, and for its originality. The argument of the chapter is that some of the most interesting work in cinema in Indonesia is films that consciously address issues of group interaction within a community and pay particular attention to body language. The films discussed, and the performance event on which one is based, give definition to what the chapter in general terms will tentatively explore and characterize—using a range of theoretical writings—as a distinctive body language found in many parts of the archipelago, subject of course to regional variations and to historical change.

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If one looks at distinctive and seminal films produced by the European avant-garde, such as Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) and *L'Age d'Or* (1930), or by the American avant-garde, in Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), *At Land* (1945) and *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1947), one can see that the minimal use of linear narrative coherence in these works allows other aspects of the *mise en scène*, and other kinds of connections—and questions about connections—to emerge for the viewer. In the case of the avowedly dream-based *Un Chien Andalou*, the severing of the eye at the opening of the film, the use of slow dissolves, multiple superimpositions and unexpected transitions create a psychic world in which characters can be seen as alter egos of each other, in which objects have a symbolic dimension reminiscent or expressive of dream states, and the energy of the film, which partly critiques the hypocrisy of 'normality', is a psychic energy, or, to use Freud's term, a libidinal energy, operating according to principles of repression, disguise, displacement, wish-fulfilment and ambivalence. While clearly films by Maya Deren, particularly *Meshes of the Afternoon*, evoke a psychic world in which alter egos appear and draw the viewer into the mystery of the self, and its manifold forms, this is usually done from the point of view of one central character, played by Deren herself, tracing a journey, organized in episodes, sometimes taking a repetitive serial form. But in Deren, in contrast to Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, it is not simply the psychic or, at times, social world that can figure prominently, but the human body itself, and its creative multiplicity, its manifold 'selves' and energies, incorporated as it is in most of Deren's work primarily in her own body and in the striking bodily states and bodily movements she performs, often related to, sometimes even explicitly using (as in *Ritual in Transfigured Time*) modern dance.[1]

But if one turns to a key work in the Indonesian avant-garde, particularly the short film to be discussed in the next section, Sardono W. Kusuma and Gotot Prakosa's *Meta Ekologi* (1979), a work that has something of the power of the works by Buñuel and Dali, and by Deren, discussed above, we find something very different. It is not the psyche that figures prominently, nor even the individual body, as in Deren, but multiple bodies

[1] See Luis Buñuel's 'Notes on the Making of *Un Chien Andalou*', in Scott Macdonald, ed., *Art in Cinema: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2006, 101–2. For a detailed analysis of films by Maya Deren, see P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde, 1943–2000*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, 3–42.

organized—or rather spontaneously organizing themselves—as a group, that is most distinctive. The illuminating strangeness of *Meta Ekologi* arises not so much from alter egos and the production of psychic states and multiple inner selves, as in the sense of group movement—and group identity in humans existing in a very basic environment—a group movement that is present even when there is dissent within the group.

In this chapter I therefore shift my argument from an examination of films that explore regional societies and make use of regional cultural forms, to a discussion specifically focused on body language in three key Indonesian avant-garde films, and the implications of this body language. Nevertheless, two of these films are region based, and do make use of regional cultural forms. One of the films, *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* ('Poetry Cannot Be Buried'), uses cultural forms that evolved in Aceh, in farthest Western Indonesia; the other, *The Sorceress of Dirah*, was made in Bali, which is in a more central part of Indonesia, just to the east of Java. *Meta Ekologi*—the first film to be discussed—is more universal in its imagery. This chapter aims to explore various dimensions, within the Indonesian experience, of 'the I' being tied to others, as it is sometimes expressed in group body language in an Indonesian film. The chapter will commence with a detailed discussion of the imagery in these films. On the basis of the empirical evidence of this imagery, the chapter will then address the issue of how one can account for the body language of a group, using theoretical works by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, and by Pierre Bourdieu and others. Subsequently, in Chap. 6, I will explore a larger range of examples of body language, mainly in Indonesian feature films, and also—to widen the historical frame of reference—in a well-known nineteenth-century Javanese painting, and in imagery in the wall engravings of the ninth-century Buddhist *stupa*, Candi Borobudur, in central Java.

Group Body Language in *Meta Ekologi* (1979)

The Javanese dancer and performance artist Sardono W. Kusuma is well known in theatrical circles both in Indonesia and abroad.[2] In 1974 he and his dance workshop, based in the village of Teges near Ubud in Bali, per-

[2] Biographical information about Sardono can be found at the following website: Jakarta Portal, http://www.jakarta.go.id/web/encyclopedia/detail/2726/Sardono-Waluyo-Kusumo, accessed 15 March 2016. In 2005 Sardono was appointed Rector of the Institut Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Institute of the Arts).

formed in Paris at the invitation of Peter Brook, but over nearly a 50-year period he has also performed in numerous other European countries, in the USA, India, Switzerland, Australia and Japan, as well as regularly producing innovative work in Indonesia.

In 1979 Sardono staged a remarkable performance event, known as *Meta Ekologi*, in the grounds of the cultural centre in Jakarta, Taman Ismail Marzuki. Aspects of this event were then filmed by the experimental filmmaker, Gotot Prakosa, at that time a young teacher in the Faculty of Cinematography at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, also located in Taman Ismail Marzuki. The footage was edited to form a 16-minute experimental film. In the film we see not only the performance itself, which takes place in a field between the Taman Ismail Marzuki cultural centre and the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, but also an audience of local children from the surrounding, relatively poor suburban area, ranged on a mound along the length of one side of the performance area, watching fascinated (Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1 A frame enlargement from the avant-garde short film, *Meta Ekologi*, directed by Gotot Prakosa, and based on a performance event staged by Sardono W. Kusuma at the Jakarta cultural centre known as Taman Ismail Marzuki in 1979 (Courtesy of Gotot Prakosa and Arthur and Corinne Cantrill)

Unlike the other work by Sardono to be discussed here, *The Sorceress of Dirah*, which is derived from traditional Balinese dance and theatre performances, and most of which is clearly located in Bali, using identifiable Balinese legendary characters and iconography, *Meta Ekologi* is not obviously connected with any particular region. It is an avant-garde work that breaks out of locatable civilizational cultural models, but is a powerful primordial symbol radiating implications for many aspects of South East Asian life. It is likely, however, that *Meta Ekologi*, with its ecological concerns, was influenced by Sardono's encounter with a Dayak tribe from Central Kalimantan, the Tauw Kenyah people, and the way they preserved their environment. Sardono stayed with the Tauw Kenyah people when supervising students in the area in 1978. In 1979 he staged *Meta Ekologi* outdoors in mud, 'to create an awareness of earth and water and to emphasize the importance of the interdependence of human and natural ecologies'.[3]

The performance takes place in a large but shallow rectangular pond of mud, excavated in a field. It consists initially of a group of nine men, first, one by one, dropping into the mud and then, after resting there, on all fours crawling together through the mud, as though engaged in purposeful group movement, activity or play, at times like a herd or flock of animals, in the sense of a group foraging or grazing, but never losing the sense of incongruity arising from the fact that they are human beings. Some wear clothes (shorts or a sarong), which are soon caked in dripping mud. They crawl and swim together in the shallow mud, climb upon and tumble over one another, and at one point stand and form a forward-moving and twisting line, each holding onto the one ahead of him. This viscous spectacle is at once comic and strangely powerful and disturbing, partly homoerotic, but producing numerous other connotations. In any shot there are so many arrangements of the figures that one could extrapolate numerous details. In the background of one shot, a figure that has just flopped into the mud is gently stroked or groomed by another, who has been there for some time. In the foreground of another shot, but partly hidden by shadow, a figure who is determined to leave behind the pond, and hence the group, attempts to free himself from another figure behind him, who is holding him with his hand around his stomach.

[3] For an account of Sardono's work at this time, see Sal Murgiyanto, 'Sardono: Dialogues with Humankind and Nature', in Naomi Jackson and Toni Shapiro-Phim, *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion*, Lanham MD, Scarecrow Press, 2008, 204–11.

The first 10 minutes of the film do not use continuity editing in any strict way, but the shots joined together are so powerful that they create a continuity of overall affect. Each figure has its own individual character, which sometimes comes to the fore, but the emphasis is on the group movement. Howls and whines of what appear to be animals (or the imitation of animal sounds) are heard on the sound track. No identifiably human sounds are heard. The movement through the mud goes through various phases, and gradually there is greater use of incipient narrative continuity. At one point one of the figures is glimpsed climbing a greasy pole as though to survey the landscape for signs of some form of escape. He sits at the top of the pole; his face is lizard-like as seen in close-up profile, and caked with mud. The howls increase. As organized in film time, the film culminates in the men arriving at the opposite corner shore of the pond, and slowly attempting to surmount it, as in mime finding obstacles which we cannot see, for there is no physical barrier to them moving from the pond. Eventually they begin to move up on to the dry mud that leads to the grassy surrounds. Some show irritation, at one point throwing mud balls at one who has now left the group behind, and moved fully on to the grass, who then reciprocates in kind, with an expression of exasperation throwing a large pack of mud back at his fellow creatures. The group slowly comes ashore, gathering in the dry mud at the corner of the pool.

There is in the film, but apart from the group, another figure, who appears to be some kind of leader or spiritual figure, dressed entirely in white. Early in the film he appears sitting, smoking a pipe, distanced from the performance in which he will appear. At a point quite late in the film he performs a controlled, slow-motion twisting fall into the mud, his arms flailing out repeatedly to control his balance. This is watched by the group lined up in the corner. There is a tension in the film between the group and this figure, who is conscious of the group yet apart from it. Subsequently he lies alone, facing upward in the mud, and ritualistically arranges the upper part of his clothing, slowly and carefully accommodating himself to his position in the mud as he sinks into it. He eventually assumes a position somewhat like a medieval stone figure on top of a grave in a cathedral. In the background, in long shots of the pond, a single figure moves around the pond, raking it with a smoothing device, like a hoe. Late in the film, darkness settles on the site, in a shot that positions the group of protagonists, lying on their bellies on the shore, restlessly looking back at the mud pool (Fig. 5.2). The looming darkness is accelerated by the speeded up motion of the camera. This speeded up motion also creates an effect

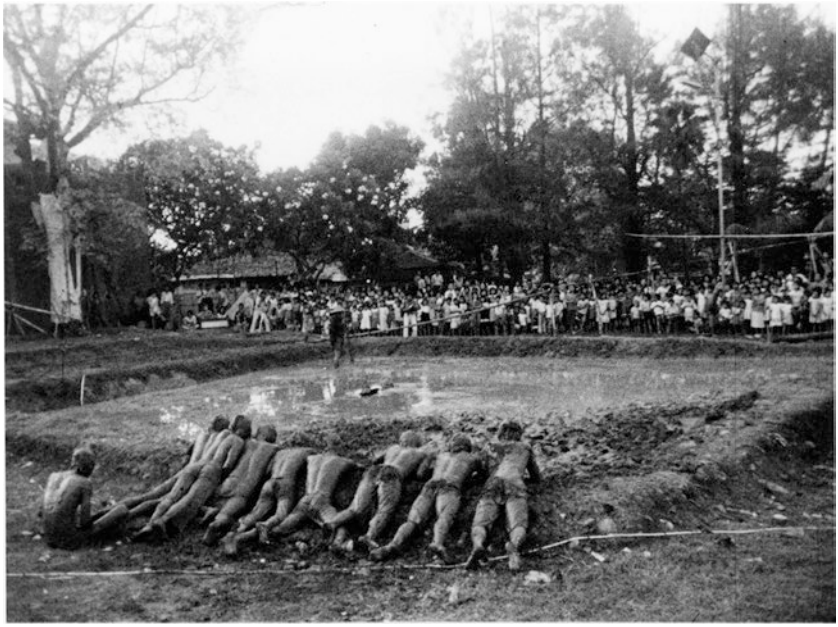

Fig. 5.2 The last, long-held shot of *Meta Ekologi*, a long-held shot which, using speeded up motion, subsequently fades slowly into night (Courtesy of Gotot Prakosa and Arthur and Corinne Cantrill)

of an eternal repetition of the actions of the protagonists. Events become more momentary and figures and movements become abbreviated. The sound of cicadas grows on the sound track and the moon is glimpsed through trees in the background. Later, a single figure in the dry mud in the right corner performs yoga movements, upside down, with inverted legs. The spectacle is overwhelmed by night.

The potent and strange affect of this unusual film is utterly memorable, so much so that Australian advocates of a filmic avant-garde, Corinne and Arthur Cantrill, see this film, as I do, in a small but distinctive tradition of powerful avant-garde short films, whether by Buñuel and Dali, Jean Vigo or by Maya Deren.[4] Nevertheless, despite the power of the work,

[4]See Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, 'Interview with Gotot Prakosa', *Cantrills Filmnotes* 63–4, December 1990, 25–31; David Hanan, 'Gotot Prakosa and Independent Indonesian Cinema', *Cantrills Filmnotes* 63–4, December 1990, 23–4.

one should note as well the way in which aspects of this film contextualize it as performance, not as drama, and frame it with elements of wit and provocation. It is a filmed performance because there are people, including many children, in the background watching the performance with fascination. In the main body of the film there is also a filmic prologue to the lengthy scene of the group moving together in the pond, with shots of various preparations being made for the performance by young men in a garden, with a background of modern buildings. These preparations include shots of simple bamboo pipes, as used in basic irrigation, being connected, and water starting to run from them onto the soil; and also of palm fronds, of the kind used in rituals and ceremonies as decoration in Java and Bali, these being connected to a bamboo propeller-style windmill. In both cases there is an element of the impractical as well as the practical, as though these practical objects are symbolic or ceremonial, rather than of real use in the preparations. The first shot after the credits is the medium shot of the charismatic Sardono, sitting and waiting, dressed entirely in white, wearing glasses and lighting a pipe, with objects from the preparations in the background, thus suggesting a purposeful and thought-out basis for what will follow. It is of course Sardono who is the solitary figure in white who performs the slow-motion controlled fall into the pond late in the film.

What are we to make of this event? In the Indonesian context it parallels a number of aspects of the society. It obviously parallels aspects of the life of an average Indonesian rice farmer, who through wet rice cultivation will regularly spend days up to his knees, or higher, in the mud of his fields, sometimes working collectively with other members of his extended family or his village. So the performance event highlights a very common experience for a rural village dweller, and this is referenced in the 'practical' preparations for the performance, in the film's prologue. Second, the film correlates with the daily common experience of many urban inhabitants, specifically the urban poor, who, certainly at the time the film was made, still in many areas of Jakarta, made use of muddy polluted rivers for toiletry, bathing, and for washing clothes and utensils. Also in Jakarta, at that time, climbing the greasy pole competitions were found regularly on Independence Day, as a form of entertainment for the people, particularly for those whose dwellings were located along riverbanks. A third parallel is the idea of the emergence of life out of slime, or the emergence of water-based life onto land, and the continuing centrality of water to human life. And, fourth, there is indeed an amphibious fish, known as the mudskipper

(*periophthalmus gracilis*), found in mangrove ecosystems in South East Asia and elsewhere, that intermittently moves from sea to land in muddy shallow areas. The group formation of the men in the pond also echoes the capacity that some non-human species have for moving in a spontaneously arrived at but instinctively organized group formation, clearly sensing their relation to a group. The fact, however, that the only figures in the performance event are men, and that no women appear, surely refers to the strong, same-sex group bonds found in many parts of Indonesia and South East Asia, manifested in wall reliefs, in numerous traditional performance forms, and found even today in daily life in the spontaneous behaviour of children and teenagers. Examples of group bonding shown in feature films, including teen movies, will be discussed in the next chapter.

It is apparent from the clothes worn by the children watching the performance that they are local children, most of them from the slums fronting the river at the rear of Taman Ismail Marzuki and the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, the river being a branch of the polluted Ciliwung River, which flows through Central Jakarta and which, for many of these children, served the many functions of bathing, of toiletry and of washing. So while these children watch the performance with fascinated attention, amazement and perhaps even disbelief, the performance event is also paralleling aspects of their own lives and the lives of their nearest relatives. Both the filmmaker and the performance artist have jointly worked to set up some of these parallels. The children have been allowed to witness the performance event, even as the film is being shot. Staff teaching at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts have long seen it as important not to ignore the realities of their immediately surrounding environment. But despite the contemporary references to the nearby inner-city, semi-slum suburb, the combined use of speeded up motion and growing darkness at the end of the film lend a sense of timelessness to the increasingly archetypal images that conclude the film.

To return to the earlier comparison with some aspects of major films by members of the European and American avant-garde, we can now note that *Meta Ekologi* has a conception of the group—and of group interrelatedness—entirely absent from the European and American examples discussed above, except perhaps for the later multi-racial dance films by Maya Deren. While *Meta Ekologi* is full of grim humour of a kind not unlike that found in *Un Chien Andalou*, with its images of inner psychic activity, in so far as there is, in *Meta Ekologi*, a conception of 'the psyche', it is deliberately presented as a collective psyche in which the mysteriousness, and at times absurdity, of group connectedness is emphasized as a fundamental and

long-established dimension of emerging humanity. In so far as there is individualism or leadership in the film, it is present in a philosophical dimension in the figure of the sage in white who exists to some extent apart from the others and submits himself ultimately to the condition of the others, laying himself out in a considered and controlled fall into the mud, though subsequently to be glimpsed performing yoga in the background, inverted, with his head in the mud and his feet in the air, as darkness falls. His presence provides a contrast and a point of reference for the group as a whole, but not at the expense of the pervasive sense of a collective existence.

Research in Anthropology on Proxemics, Kinesics and Choreometrics

In his recent book *Mise en Scène and Film Style*, in a chapter entitled 'A Detour via Reality: Social *Mise en scène*', Adrian Martin emphasizes the importance of the formidable volume of work done on body behaviour by the anthropologists and cross-cultural researchers Edward T. Hall, who coined the term proxemics (uses of space—often culturally based—in human interaction), and Ray Birdwhistell, who invented the term kinesics (the study of body movements, facial expressions and gestures as forms of communication), and who used photography, including high-speed movie cameras, to provide and document evidence for his research on human gesture.[5] Hall in particular, in his theorization of proxemics, distinguishes between different kinds of distance (intimate, personal, social and public), observing at the same time that these various 'distances' vary in proximity depending on the culture. Martin thus sees his own chapter on 'social *mise en scène*', as engaging with a relatively neglected area within film studies, broadly using categories and frameworks established by Hall and by Birdwhistell to explore what he and others term 'micro-gestures' in feature films by Fassbinder, Buñuel, John Ford and others. Martin shows

[5] Adrian Martin, *Mise en Scène and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 138. See also Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, New York, Anchor Books, 1969, and Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970. Martin also cites examples of film analysis undertaken using concepts derived from Birdwhistell and Hall as starting points, notably William Buckland, 'Bodies in Filmic Space: The *Mise en Scène* of "Courtship Readiness" in *The Big Sleep*', *Senses of Cinema* 66, March 2013.

how *mise en scène* in film works at two levels, in its moment-by-moment dramatic developments deploying micro-gestures, at the same time exposing them to social conventions, or a sense of the breaking of social conventions, implicitly embedded in the *mise en scène*. For Martin this gives film a basis not only in the imagination, or in the director's worldview or personal vision, but in social codes and the way a film utilizes, interacts or collides with these codes (as we saw in the Indonesian comedy film *Tiga Buronan*, discussed in the previous chapter). Nevertheless, while Martin explores the use of micro-gestures, often based in social codes, by and large he does not attempt to explore films in culturally specific terms, tending to analyse or cite examples which use codes that might be recognized as universal social codes.

This chapter discussing body language in films by the Indonesian avant-garde builds on work I commenced in the late 1980s, examining what I argued was culturally specific group body language in an Indonesian historical film.[6] The next two avant-garde films I discuss are films that not only place an emphasis on groups and group interaction in a community, but at points use a recognized regional dance, as well, as part of their *mise en scène*. Of course the movement and body language (or kinesics and proxemics) in the dances are already socially accepted, and the dances are frequently practised within the culture, and so are not simply choreography produced by the director of the film. What is incorporated into the film visually and dramatically is already an accepted cultural form. At this point one might invoke two more terms, 'choreometrics' and 'cantometrics', terms used by ethnographer Alan Lomax for methods he developed—in his extensive work on folk songs and folk dance—'by means of which the gross characteristics of movement style (especially dance) and musical style (especially songs) can be analyzed and compared cross-culturally'.[7] At this point in his work Lomax was primarily interested in cross-cultural analysis, in isolating general features across a number of dances within different societies, measuring patterns of movement in order to group them in categories he was developing.

[6]David Hanan, 'Film and Cultural Difference: *November 1828*', in Krishna Sen, ed., *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988, 25–47.

[7]See Alan Lomax, 'Audiovisual Tools for the Analysis of Culture Style', in Paul Hockings, *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, The Hague, Mouton, 1975, 308.

This chapter does not use the very specific research methods developed by Lomax, aimed at finding similarities across cultures internationally, but addresses the particularities of expression within a culture, or related cultures, drawing attention primarily to one parameter, the proxemics of the body within group situations, and relating these to other cultural features and discourses in the films. In doing so it returns to work done even earlier than that of Lomax and his colleagues, the pioneering visual anthropology of Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead undertaken in Bali in the late 1930s.

Participatory Regional Performance Forms: The *Barong* in Sardono W. Kusuma's *The Sorceress of Dirah* (1992)

Writing of the arts in South East Asia generally (and of Malaysia in particular), Wazir Jahan Karim affirms that, in contrast to European aesthetic traditions, where one is often a spectator removed from a performance, which is set apart by a stage, and one relates to a particular art form as an outside observer, whether as critic, enthusiast or expert, numerous South East Asian aesthetic traditions, based in village life, often prioritize participatory components that engage many community members. This is particularly true of theatre and dance. Taking as a key example the *kuda kepang* (hobby horse dance), found in both Malaysia and Java, which she sees as signifying 'the crystallization of the forces of animism in a predominantly Muslim world', Karim continues:

> Many different art forms have developed combining artistry with socialization—martial arts, as a media for achieving body elegance and real combat skills, folk theatre (*Mak Yong*, *Main Puteri*, *Mek Mulung*) which combine entertainment with ethno-psychiatry, shamanistic séances which lead individuals towards catharsis and yet have evolved into a theatrical media, and, finally, dancing which serves to fulfil the emotions of spiritualism within the confines of a close group or community. In animism, dancing becomes a force for individuals to develop an intimate relation with the spirits of the overworld, a practical realization of a moral necessity.[8]

[8]Wazir Jahan Karim, 'Introduction: Emotions in Perspective', in Wazir Jahan Karim, ed., *Emotions of Culture: A Malay Perspective*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1990, 19.

While the performance forms cited in this passage are all Malaysian, in Indonesia we find a similar phenomenon across the whole archipelago, whether it be the *randai* circular dance in West Sumatra, which has elements of martial arts incorporated; the competitive group chanting of Acehnese *didong*; *reog Ponogoro* in East Java, which includes hobby horse dancing; the village-based interactive dances in which many can participate in turn, such as the Javanese *ronggeng* and the Balinese *joget*; or the traditional *Rangda* and *Barong* performance in Bali, with their cathartic and shamanistic elements.

In what follows I will examine two films that engage with traditional performance forms, Sardono's *The Sorceress of Dirah*, which is set largely in Bali and which incorporates substantial elements of Balinese performance forms, and Garin Nugroho's *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan*, which uses elements of Acehnese *didong*. Initially I will discuss the differences between these two works, but also, following my major theme in this chapter, I will discuss ways in which to some extent they both display a similar group-oriented body language.

In the experimental colour film he made in Bali in 1992, *The Sorceress of Dirah* ('Dongeng dari Dirah'), Sardono W. Kusuma uses the Balinese *Rangda-Barong* dance as the basis of a film that also returns, in part, to some of the themes articulated in *Meta Ekologi*. But *The Sorceress of Dirah* is quite different from the low budget *Meta Ekologi*, not only due to its use of colour and 35-millimetre production values, but because it largely bases its imagery in identifiable traditional iconography from one or two particular regional areas, which it develops and recontextualizes, rather than finding new imagery to express what are clearly very old phenomena, which is the stratagem of *Meta Ekologi*. Nevertheless, traditional imagery, including images of closely networked groups of people, is reworked by Sardono in his own way and to his own ends.

In part *The Sorceress of Dirah* is concerned with the power of witchcraft as embodied in the sorceress of the village Dirah, a sorceress who, in the original Balinese story, is given the name Calon Arang, or Rangda (in the Balinese language the word *Rangda* means widow). The film, which is divided into four parts, climaxes in a scene of confrontation between Rangda and the *Barong*, the tutelary spirit, theatrically embodied in the dragon figure with a lion's head. In these respects this film is presenting very traditional Balinese theatrical material, as it has been performed live in villages for many years, and nowadays is commonly performed for tourists, if in simplified form. Later parts of *The Sorceress of Dirah* follow

fairly exactly this village-based dance drama, particularly the film's climax, where the struggle between the *Barong* and Rangda becomes overt and highly dramatic. But the film has other parts not derived from village performances, such as part three, 'The Daughter of Dirah', concerned with the relation of Dirah to her daughter, and the final part, 'The Children of Dirah', the opening of which presents an erotic encounter between the daughter of Dirah and her lover, but which then moves to the traditional climax of the staged drama, a highly theatrical scene of exorcism of the witch's power. The film also contains a prologue presenting its own preoccupations and themes.

Some might argue that the story of Rangda, even as it is presented in *The Sorceress of Dirah*, reworks what is fundamentally a Balinese patriarchal myth that perpetuates negative stereotypes of women, particularly in the figure of the witch. The Indonesian philosopher and poet, Toeti Heraty, in a lengthy prose poem narrates an early version of the Calon Arang story, and uses it to reflect generally upon the position of women in society and particularly of widows, arguing that the story is a patriarchal myth which deflects criticism of state power, and of patriarchy, onto the stereotyped figure of the aged widow figure, Rangda, whose main aim was to protect her daughter.[9] Jane Belo, in a lengthy anthropological study, has pointed to the relation between the Rangda witch figure and the ambiguous or negative mother image embodied in the Hindu goddess Kali, where the power and centrality of the mother—and the respect to be accorded to her—are emphasized, arguing that her predominant characteristics are not purely negative.[10] Jane Belo further suggests that given that the lion-like figure bears a resemblance to the dragon masks of China and Japan, which also perform a similar function, then within this ritual one finds a spiritual encounter between elements of Sivaite faith, embodied in Rangda, and Buddhism, embodied in the *Barong*.[11] A frequent statement about this kind of Balinese theatre, in fact reiterated in the voice-over of the film early in part two, 'Dirah the Witch', is that the repeated acting out of the drama of the conflict between the witch and the *Barong* (never fully resolved) for the time being neutralizes the negative forces in the village, finding a new

[9] Toeti Heraty, *Calon Arang: The Story of a Woman Sacrificed to Patriarchy*, Jakarta, Sanur, Saritaksu Editions with Galeri Cemara 6, 2006.

[10] See Jane Belo, *Bali: Rangda and Barong*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1949, 18–39.

[11] Ibid., 32–3.

balance between good and evil, at a time when evil forces may be present, shortly after the rice harvest. This kind of extremely dramatic and powerful theatre might be seen in psychological terms as a kind of exorcism. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in this drama, as in many Western fairy tales, evil forces are primarily associated with an aged female figure, the personification of a kind of living death.

But *The Sorceress of Dirah* also presents images from other aspects of Balinese dance performances, and at times uses non-Balinese imagery, including one whole sub-section that uses imagery from Candi Sukuh, the fifteenth-century Hindu mountain temple on Mount Lawu, near the border between Central and East Java provinces. Candi Sukuh— a temple built shortly before the coming of Islam to the area—is famous for its remarkable erotic carvings and statuary, and for its overtly presented themes of sexual liberation.

My main concern in discussing *The Sorceress of Dirah* is, once again, given my theme, its presentation of group behaviour, a recurring motif in the imagery of Sardono's work. The group elements of the film are seen in the following ways. Early in the film, before the drama begins, is a prologue that, using Balinese imagery, allegorizes ideas of man's relation to nature and to its fertility. It is at this point that the film emphasizes the collective and group nature of Balinese village life; in its earthiness this is reminiscent of *Meta Ekologi*. In this first part, a prologue, we have a sequence that begins with shots of Balinese farmers tilling the soil until they work themselves rhythmically down into the earth so far that they begin to disappear into it. This is then followed by a transition to shots of a *kecak* dance, where a chorus of men, representing monkeys, sit on the ground in two or more concentric circles. This is a striking mandala-like image, filmed from directly above the male performers, who, snakelike, have formed themselves into a coiled circle. Within this image, conceived by Sardono, a red dragon figure, the *Barong*, moves, its long red body interleaved between the circles of men (Fig. 5.3). At this moment there is a transition back to shots of farmers digging in the earth. They dig so far into the earth that each becomes swallowed up in it. Later, in this sequence, perhaps as a consequence or outcome of their toil, the rice goddess, Dewi Sri, appears, accompanied by chanting. Here in this prologue we have a metaphor of the relation between human productivity, as a particular relation to the soil, collectively addressed, and the continuation of life. The images developed by Sardono at the opening of the film are a tribute to the forces and the collective human energies that have created Balinese civilization, and

Fig. 5.3 The spirit of the *Barong* dragon enters the circular formation of monkey-men in the images from the Balinese *kecak* dance that form part of the allegorical introduction to Sardono W. Kusuma's *The Sorceress of Dirah* (1992) (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

to their expression in imagery developed within performance traditions of regional Balinese culture. Sardono's images emphasize both the collective nature of Balinese village life, and its earthiness.

But the film now develops in other ways, connected with Balinese ideas of the spirit world. In the second part, 'Dirah the Witch', we are introduced to village performers preparing for a village play presented at the conclusion of the rice harvest, at a time when negative spirits can enter the village of Dirah. The play is to be about the sorceress of Dirah, and as it develops, the central player, an enormous male representing the witch, moves beyond merely acting, into an orgy of fulfilment of the destructive

avarice of the sorceress, the villagers fleeing in his path, the wreckage of the night strewn across the village square the following morning. At the end of this second part of the film the question is asked, if this is a play, is it possible for a play to release into the village the real supernatural elements, abounding in the village, to which the play refers? In *The Sorceress of Dirah* the particular exorcism required is the release of Dirah's daughter from her mother's spell. In part three, 'Daughter of Dirah', a potential suitor for the daughter, a spectral figure, is summoned from the grave by the mother and provided to the daughter, but he is depicted as overwhelmed by the power of the mother—played again by a man—as his courtship begins. In modern psychoanalytic or, more specifically in Jungian terms, one might argue that an internalized parental imago (of the mother) interferes with a potential relationship, and such an interpretation of this story would be possible—as it is dramatized by Sardono—as we see in the exorcism which climaxes the fourth part of the film, 'Children of Dirah'.[12]

'Children of Dirah' commences in the Sukuh temple in Java, and here collective images occur again. At the opening of this last part of the film there is an erotic encounter between Dirah's daughter and a lover, presented as a kind of initiation into true eroticism, surrounded by the half-animal, half-human erotic images and statuary of the Sukuh temple, and by other couples, in the throes of ecstatic desire. Dirah's daughter herself moves like a bird on top of her lover, wings fluttering, as in the world-creation legend of the copulation between the bird and the snake, while other figures (silhouetted couples) can be glimpsed in ecstatic postures within trees. This scene is a hymn to human desire, on the soundtrack a voice chanting of the intermingling of opposites (male and female), the passion experienced, in effect, itself a kind of exorcism, which triggers the appearance of the witch, Rangda, who is then countered by the *Barong* and by warriors at the climax of part four. The desire presented in the scene is presented as universal desire, with an image of couples, arms linked across each other's upper backs, with naked shoulders glinting in the moon; the couples linked together, in turn, in a rising procession that forms a long human chain, moving towards the trapezium-shaped altar of the Sukuh temple. Here we have young humans, as a group, approaching, with reverence, an ultimately myste-

[12] See Jung's discussion of the psychological aspects of the mother archetype, in C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Part I of vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, second edition, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, 75–100.

rious archetype of shared human experience, the mystery of creation, linked in turn in the imagery, with birds copulating. Through a subtle shift, the significance of the moment is not simply the personal experience of the individual, but the transpersonal encounter that accompanies the process of creation.

The choice of the Hindu Javanese temple of Sukuh as the location, with its archetypal erotic imagery, both emphasizes the sacred transformative power of passion and puts into discourse, within Indonesia again, images of sexuality which the coming of Islam repressed, parts of the temple, having been destroyed with the arrival of Islam in Java, including a 6 metre *lingam* (penis) which, centuries later, was found cut in half among the remaining structures.[13] As an independent production, *The Sorceress of Dirah*, although not released in cinemas, was shown at private screenings in Indonesia and at festivals abroad, and would not have been subject to censorship. Here, via the idea of universal experience, Sardono expresses in striking visual ways, something of the deep structures of fundamental—and therefore shared—experience.

However, we should note that the film presents a different kind of collective experience from that expressed in *Meta Ekologi*, referring not to one group, but to the shared experience (because archetypal) of those not necessarily within the same group. So one can in fact postulate two notions of collectivity in *The Sorceress of Dirah*. First, there is the collectivity of the Balinese male community, like the groups in *Meta Ekologi*, seen in the coiled human chain of the male *kecak* dance, and a related kind of collectivity, in the couples in the human chain of lovers. Second, there is the collectivity in the shared experience of potentially universal, deep forms of feeling, towards which the film wishes to move, and which is dramatized both by the eroticism and by the human chain. The film concludes with the birth of a child, seemingly the result of a spiritual journey of the lovers, and this is followed by a concluding credits sequence which begins with the shadow of a large passenger jet flying for some minutes over the greenery of numerous Balinese stepped rice fields, presumably an allusion to the contemporary invasion of tourism into Bali, but possibly, also, an intimation of other—interplanetary—forces.

[13]See Stanley J. O'Connor, 'Metallurgy and Immortality at Candi Sukuh, Central Java, *Indonesia* 39, 1985, 52–70.

Participatory Regional Performance Forms: *Didong* in Garin Nugroho's *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* (1999)

To further illustrate the point that images of group and collective experience, which are in turn derived from traditional cultural forms, are sometimes reworked in Indonesian avant-garde cinema, one may take the example of one of the finest films by Garin Nugroho, *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* ('Poetry Cannot Be Buried', but also known simply as *The Poet*). *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan*, filmed in 1999, less than two years after the fall of Suharto, is not based on a traditional local story but on recent modern events.[14] The film is an act of commemoration for the victims of the Indonesia-wide massacres of communists and alleged communists by the Indonesian army in 1965 and 1966, the action of the whole film set in a prison in the Gayo Highlands in Aceh in October 1965. There is no dominant main character in the film. Rather, the characters in the film consist of a large group of prisoners who are to be executed as part of the nation-wide wave of executions following the events of the night of 30 September 1965. Intermittently we see and hear, throughout the film, harrowing roll calls in which individuals are summoned—in the strident, ringing voices of prison guards—to go out to be murdered in roadside executions in the middle of the night.

But while they are prisoners they are also members of a community with its own very meaningful local performance forms. Within the prison the prisoners tell each other stories and—out of mutual solidarity—act out a performance of *didong*, a village-based interactive song-and-dance tradition which is part of the very active oral cultural traditions of the Gayo Highlands. In *didong* there are normally two groups formed into circles, the singing and chanting performance led by a *ceh* (leader), who improvises a song, the performances amounting to a competition between the two circles of men.

In *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* all the male prisoners are presented as performers of *didong*, and most male villagers would at some stage have participated in *didong* performances as part of village activities, some of

[14]For a lengthy discussion of this film, see Anne Rutherford, 'Garin Nugroho: Didong, Cinema and the Embodiment of Politics in Cultural Form', in Anne Rutherford, *What Makes a Film Tick? Cinematic Affect, Materiality and Mimetic Innervation*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2011, also in *Screening the Past* 20, 2006 at http://www.screeningthepast.com/2014/12/garin-nugroho-didong-cinema-and-the-embodiment-of-politics-in-cultural-form/, accessed 9 May 2016.

Fig. 5.4 The poet Ibrahim Kadir performs *didong*, together with other prisoners held as communists by the Suharto-led Indonesian army, in a prison in the highlands of Aceh in October 1965, in Garin Nugroho's *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* ('Poetry Cannot Be Buried'), completed in 1999, the year after President Suharto had been forced to step down (Courtesy of Garin Nugroho)

them coming to be regarded as exceptionally skilled performers of *didong*. Throughout this harrowing film, the men keep up their spirits by telling each other stories and reminiscing, but also by performing *didong*, led in this by renowned (Muslim) *didong* poet and performer, Ibrahim Kadir (Fig. 5.4), who, in actual fact, in October 1965 was himself imprisoned for some weeks as an alleged communist. The film is based on Kadir's memories of his own experiences.

The film opens with a shot of a community grouped within a circle, filmed from directly above, showing a circular formation, similar to that used in Sardono's *The Sorceress of Dirah*, but based in a substantially different—because Islamic—performance tradition. These shots from above are intercut with shots of the men sitting (*duduk bersila*—squatting in tradi-

tional formal Indonesian style) taken from a variety of angles, particularly with the camera placed on the floor at the centre of the circle. In their repeated gestures of swaying hands reaching up and out, as they chant, and in the proximities and physical contacts of their adjacent limbs, there is a striking sense of group movement in unison, and of group solidarity, as one community of feeling, which recognizes itself as such.

The anthropologist John R. Bowen has studied *didong* and related it to other performance forms in the Gayo Highlands, such as 'ritual speaking'.[15] Of particular interest here is that Bowen has compared manuscripts and wax recordings of *didong* as it was performed in 1900 and as it still existed in actual performances in the Gayo Highlands in the 1980s. Bowen shows there have been significant changes in *didong* over the twentieth century, in particular the introduction of competition between two *didong* groups as an integral part of the performance. Bowen emphasizes the importance of historically comparative anthropology, as a method, arguing that:

> the recognition that several competing forms and ideas exist in a society makes the ethnographic project necessarily historical, for the balance among those forms is constantly shifting. New forms and forces, emergent or imposed, enter the society and force redefinition of the older ideas.[16]

In *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* competition between groups of *didong* performers is removed (although not the banter between individuals) because *didong* is not presented via a modern, formally constituted ritual performance, but intermittently performed in the prison as a way of maintaining morale. So cinema too, and not only history, can produce new selections of the material, throwing the emphasis on different aspects of the culture.

Although Bowen's writings primarily concentrate on the analysis of verbal language rather than on body language, what he describes is of relevance to body language and community participation. For instance, his discussion of 'turn-taking' in 'ritual speaking' shows how formal changes,

[15] Discussions of performance forms in the Gayo Highlands of Aceh are to be found in John R. Bowen, *Sumatran Poetry and Politics: Gayo History, 1900–1989*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1991, particularly in Chapter 7: 'Authoritative Maxims and Ritual Speaking'; Chapter 8: 'Poetry and Contest: 1900–1945'; and Chapter 9: 'The Poetic Mediation of Political Change, 1945–1989'.

[16] Ibid., 271.

where formal interactive qualities are lost, have implications for the view of society and power relations within it:

> Turn-taking, for example, takes on different political values of equality or dominance according to the distribution of the right to speak or to delay and repress speech … In relatively egalitarian societies the major political import of ritual speaking may be the capacity of the turn-taking it legitimates to create an arena in which actors may resolve matters of public concern without disrupting social relations. Gayo ritual speaking highlights the interactional quality of speakers, both through its explicit statements about authority and through its capacity to reach agreement in an interactive mode. In its precolonial form, sung poetry playfully replicates these formal interactive qualities.[17]

Bowen's evidence suggests that ritual speaking in 1900 in Aceh was dialogic and egalitarian, but that with the advent of the nation-state, and particularly during the Suharto New Order period when he undertook his research, it became more simplified, linear and authoritarian, indeed leading at times to a modern, monologic form of address, displacing any balance between hierarchy and equality, and doing away with formal procedures which had earlier been an accepted part of the ritual, which of their nature guaranteed a certain respect and equality between participants.

So it has been established that there appear to be significant changes in form in *didong* over a period of nearly a century. Nevertheless, in *The Sorceress of Dirah* and *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* we have two films and two performance traditions, one from the most western province of Indonesia, Aceh, the other, from Bali, geographically on the eastern perimeter of central Indonesia, both presenting strikingly graphic images of community, even as they explore a range of different issues, whether it be the traumas of political history or village-based shamanistic theatre. The similar scenes and images from both *The Sorceress of Dirah* and *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* discussed above are graphic and culturally resonant. Both conceive of communities as forming tight circles of linked participants. In both there is a closeness of physical proximity, manifest bodily contact, and a shared group movement expressive of community solidarity.

[17] Ibid., 142–3.

Group Body Language and the Concept of 'Habitus': Models from Anthropological Theory

A number of commentators have analysed the group orientation of South East Asian traditional societies, notable early examples being the anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead in their pioneering work of visual anthropology, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, based on fieldwork conducted in Bali, most of it over a two-year period from March 1936 to March 1938.[18] Using photographs as a means of documenting evidence, *Balinese Character* sets out to identify a number of distinctive cultural characteristics of the Balinese, the analyses centred on the body and on body language, involving detailed discussions of posture and micro-gestures. Bateson and Mead note a number of key characteristics. One is the Balinese love of crowds—counter-balanced by *nyepi*, the day of silence, on which everyone must stay at home and no social activities or movement outside the home is permitted. Another is the view that the Balinese have a double aspect view of the body: at one level the body is conceived as a unity, at another it is conceived as made up of separate parts, which can operate independently. Hence the richness of Balinese dancing, which can encompass movements of great sweep and harmony, but where different parts of the body play a different role, extending even to the fingers, where individual fingers are positioned differently, in intricate ways, even in dances involving other kinds of elaborate movement. Further characteristics include the special priority given to a sense of balance; and also the importance of sensing, so that the tips of the fingers, not only in dance but in ordinary life, are given a special importance. Working primarily, though not exclusively, in the highland village of Bajoeng Gede, which they believed had less of an admixture of more recent additions to Balinese culture, such as Hinduism, they argued that much of Balinese learning is visual and kinaesthetic learning. Here the child is encouraged to learn via example from the body movements of a parent or teacher, reinforced by physical contact as the parent or teacher

[18] Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, New York, The New York Academy of Sciences, 1942. Bateson and Mead's research was documented with some 25,000 still photographs taken with a Leica camera, and with 16-millimetre footage. In their book a selection of these photographs is presented on some 100 pages of plates, with up to six photographs on each page and text on the opposite page, the analysis and argument about the photographs being written up by Bateson, while Mead provided an introduction and a conclusion to the book.

(for example of dance) moves in to correct and animate the child's movements. For Bateson and Mead, 'teaching by muscular rote in which the pupil is made to perform the correct movements is most strikingly developed in the dancing lesson'.[19]

The book traces the origin, and consolidation, of many of these cultural characteristics in childrearing practices, which are documented through numerous photographs, including photographs claiming to illustrate mechanisms for conflict reduction, and the genesis of these mechanisms in playful interaction between infants and parents.[20] The assumption here is that the cultural characteristics identified in the book have come to be internalized or embodied by the individual child.

For Bateson and Mead, one key characteristic of the Balinese is what Bateson—in an article on Balinese ethos, originally published in 1949—has described as 'the steady state'. For Bateson, the Balinese do not manifest reciprocal schismogenic interaction. Schismogenic interaction is defined as sequences of interaction where 'A's acts were stimuli for B's acts, which in turn became stimuli for more intense action on the part of A, and so on'.[21] Rather, 'schismogenic sequences were not found in Bali', for the culture resists mounting conflictual interaction between individuals in situations where in many other societies we would find such behaviour. In its early sections *Balinese Character* illustrates this by studying patterns of interaction between an infant and its mother, in which mounting desire for the mother leads to indifference on her part, amounting to what is felt as rejection.[22] Bateson argues:

[19] Ibid., 87.

[20] For a recent survey and appraisal of Bateson and Mead's work in Bali, see Sally A. Ness, 'Bali, the Camera, and Dance: Performance Studies and the Lost Legacy of the Mead/Bateson Collaboration', *Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (4), November 2008, 1251–76.

[21] See Gregory Bateson, 'Bali: The Value System of a Steady State', in Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2000, 108–9. The statement 'Schismogenic sequences were not found in Bali' is on page 112, and is followed by a detailed outline, point by point, of 'the process of character formation' in Bali and the 'resulting Balinese character structure'.

[22] For the evidence presented by Bateson and Mead for the inculcation of resistance to sequences of cumulative interaction, and hence the inculcation of the 'steady state', see the following collections of photographs and related discussions in *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*: 'Awayness' (Plate 7), 'Stimulation and Frustration' (Plate 47), 'Borrowed Babies' (Plate 49) and 'Men Singin and Her Son', I and II (Plates 52 and 53).

> The perhaps basically human tendency towards cumulative personal interaction is thus muted. It is possible that some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for climax as the child becomes more fully adjusted to Balinese life.[23]

Later, at a number of points, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* goes on to explore the way in which certain traditional Balinese performance forms are expressive of this core characteristic of Balinese ethos. For example, according to Bateson and Mead, even the structure of the *Rangda/Barong* dance illustrates a basic pattern of an approach to the mother, rejection by her and a turn in upon oneself.[24] In his article on Balinese ethos, Bateson—citing the ethnomusicologist Colin McPhee—reiterates that Balinese gamelan music (and hence also gamelan music in Java) and most Balinese drama do not have the sort of 'rising intensity and climax structure characteristic of modern Occidental music, but rather a formal progression'.[25] The preservation of a plateau is also seen in the fact that Balinese society typically contains specific procedures and mechanisms for the resolution of quarrels. As one would expect, some of the arguments of this early work of visual anthropology have been contested and are subject to debate.[26] However, clearly the book is a seminal early work of visual anthropology that attempts to provide an account of how aspects of a culture are internalized by its members.

Important for my purposes here is Bateson and Mead's discussion of one fundamental characteristic of Balinese society, the Balinese love of '*rame*', literally busy closeness and physical contact. The following comment introduces the separate analyses that accompany the six photographs illustrating '*rame*' in Plate 5 of their book:

[23] Bateson, 'Bali: The Value System of a Steady State', 112–13.

[24] Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, 35. The pattern described here is also found in the story of Sangkuriang, the central character in the West Javanese legend of Tangkuban Perahu (the upturned boat). See my discussion of the popular film made of this legend, *Sangkuriang* (1982), in Chap. 7.

[25] Bateson, 'Bali: The Value System of a Steady State', 113.

[26] Critiques of Bateson and Mead are to be found in Gordon D. Jensen, and Luh Ketut Suryani, *The Balinese People: A Reinvestigation of Character*, Singapore and New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, and, to a lesser extent, in Unni Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1990. On the other hand, a key term developed by Bateson, 'plateau', has been taken over by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaux*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 21–2.

> The Balinese enjoy very much the gay impersonal atmosphere of crowded occasions. Bodily contact with friend or stranger is pleasant to them and a Balinese crowd will pack almost solid, without any of those spaces which we try to preserve around ourselves.[27]

Here Bateson and Mead in effect assert not only that the Balinese enjoy crowds and physical contact, but that the sense of personal space in Bali is different from what one finds in British and American society. While Bateson and Mead do not explore much further the busy closeness of the Balinese, it is presented at the beginning of the book because it is seen as a fundamental of the society, which is frequently present and underpins a large part of the phenomena explored in the rest of the book. It is therefore a fundamental given of the society, substantially different from what one finds in the body language of societies in which the two anthropologists were raised. Moreover, one might consider that a relatively non-conflictual ethos, with structures for conflict resolution, would be essential for a society in which there is close and continuous group interaction.

What I have analysed in the preceding section on *The Sorceress of Dirah* and *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* are examples of body language found in the reworking in film of generic performance forms found in two different parts of Indonesia, and the implication is that these performance forms in turn relate to characteristics of strong group identity, extending even to a different kind of body language in these communities from that we predominantly find in Western societies. In Western societies these kinds of ideas are recognized but rarely explored in depth, and to some extent meet with resistance. For example, the anthropologist James Boon has criticized a passing remark by Margaret Mead, made by Mead in a later article on field research methods written some 30 years after her research in Bali. Boon sees her remark as one of 'three particularly seductive fallacies about Bali'. Mead had remarked:

> The Balinese are unusually photogenic and tend to compose in groups so that half the work of photography is done for the photographer.[28]

[27] Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, 64.

[28] Margaret Mead, 'The Art and Technology of Fieldwork', in Raoul Naroll and Ronald Cohen, eds, *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology*, Garden City, Natural History Press, 1970, 259.

Of this, Boon comments:

> Rather than merely appreciating how the Balinese cluster in a way which complements her own preferences in composition … the observer here implies a natural Balinese sense of group portraiture. This verges on the fallacy of inbuilt harmony, perfect integration, super-systematics, and this is the ethnological pitfall that has most often distorted perspectives on Bali.[29]

It seems to this author that the phenomena Mead is referring to here, and refused by Boon, should not be dismissed out of hand so easily, just because it is not generally found in one's own society, or in one's own species, to the same degree. After all, birds flying across the sky cluster or develop formations in ways that are photogenic and suggest an inbuilt spontaneous sense of group organization even in movement. If a society is acknowledged to be more generally group oriented than one's own, it is also conceivable that over a long period of time that society has evolved not only a different body language expressive of group orientation, but even, to varying degrees, forms of synchronized interaction expressive of that group identity, however unconsciously arrived at or practised.

But how would one begin to theorize such phenomena? Here I am in sympathy with the view of Sally Ness that there are significant similarities between Pierre Bourdieu's conception of the *habitus*, evolved in the 1960s when working in Algeria, and some of the work done by Bateson and Mead in Bali in the 1930s.[30] Bourdieu's conception of habitus is not simply an account of the internalization of cultural patterning, but is more dynamic in conception: the habitus is made up of dispositions, in a sense 'capacities' disposed in certain ways. Bourdieu's definition is quoted in full below, because it has substantial relevance to theoretical questions posed by this chapter pertaining to how we can conceptualize a group body language as a component of a culture. Bourdieu defines 'habitus' thus:

[29] James A. Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597–1972*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 67.

[30] Sally A. Ness writes: 'Bourdieu's discussion of the embodiment of the *habitus* is so close to Bateson's observations of Balinese child development and the acquisition of cultural patterning that one wonders why Bourdieu did not cite Bateson in work on this concept.' See Sally A. Ness, 'Going Back to Bateson: Towards a Semiotics of (Post-)Ritual Performance', in Mark Franko, ed., *Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London and New York, Routledge, 2007, 23.

> The structures constitutive of a particular kind of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without consciously aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.[31]

Here we should note the flexibility inherent in the concept of habitus, which is not the product of obedience to rules, but systems of transposable dispositions, which are principles of the generation as well as the structuring of practices. Ness emphasizes in her discussion of Bourdieu this flexibility: '*Habitus* allows for a degree of individual play with the system, for the performance of variations on the themes of culture that are embodied.'[32] We should remember that Bourdieu's initial formulation of habitus cites as an example a habitus formed by class position, and this looks forward to his later work in his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, where membership of a class results in different aesthetic interests. But while one should not minimize the presence of class position within a habitus, the habitus encompasses many other things. Bourdieu himself subsequently refers to habitus as laid down from one's earliest upbringing, and as involving coordination within collective mobilization via mastery of a common code:

> The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, laid down in each agent, by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices, but also for the practices of co-ordination, since the corrections and adjustments the agents consciously carry out presuppose the mastery of a common code and since undertakings of collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the habitus of the mobilizing agents … and the dispositions of those whose worldview they express.[33]

[31] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 72. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London and New York, Routledge, 2010.

[32] Ness, 'Going Back to Bateson', 23.

[33] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 81.

In short, coordination within collective mobilization via mastery of a common code (and not Boon's 'perfect integration or super-systematics') is surely closer to what Mead is speculating about in her remarks about Balinese tending 'to compose in groups'.[34]

Issues of body language pose further intriguing theoretical questions. Ness, in her speculative article on the relevance of Bateson's writings to contemporary performance theory, also highlights differences between Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and the way in which Bateson discusses cultural embodiment, asking in what sense one can posit a conscious relation to habitus. Ness argues that while 'a body enacting *habitus* is theoretically capable of improvisation in ongoing practice', for Bourdieu embodiment of habitus is not mechanistic primarily because it is not conscious.[35] In contrast, Bateson's discussion of cultural embodiment, whether in ritual performance, as in the *Rangda-Barong* dance, or in everyday life, allows for a degree of consciousness within the body, whereby both less conscious habitus and more conscious trial-and-error explorations of relationships and relationship-forming are possible. Here Ness is particularly interested in Bateson's statement that 'it seems that the Balinese extend to human relationships attitudes based on bodily balance, and that they generalize the idea that motion is essential to balance'.[36] For Ness, this statement is based on Bateson's years of closely observing Balinese body language, and that here:

> Bateson is characterizing the tightrope walker's technique for maintaining balance as *principled* conduct. It is understood as conduct governed by embodied understandings that are extendable to non-dance, non-ritual, even non-bodily domains of cultural life.[37]

For Bateson, then, the notion of a steady state, which is a cultural value related to conflict reduction, can in turn be related back to ideas about the body and governing ideas of poise and equilibrium.

[34] Mead, 'The Art and Technology of Fieldwork', 259.

[35] Ness, 'Going Back to Bateson', 23. Ness cites Bourdieu's statement that: 'It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know' (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 79). Bourdieu here is speaking of people acting in an unreflecting way on the basis of inbuilt habit built up over time, not, for example, of a dancer consciously attempting to creatively realize a shared cultural paradigm.

[36] Bateson, 'Bali: The Value System of a Steady State', 125.

[37] Ness, 'Going Back to Bateson', 19.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the most innovative Indonesian film-artists, working in an avant-garde mode, made films that in their concerns reveal a preoccupation with groups, and with group interaction, in contrast to some of the finest examples of the European and American avant-garde (whether it be the work of Luis Buñuel or Maya Deren), which show a preoccupation with the individual psyche and the self, explored in depth. In *Meta Ekologi*, in the shots of the performance event of a group of men crawling in mud, we have imagery that breaks out of locatable civilizational cultural models but is a powerful primordial symbol subliminally radiating implications for many aspects of South East Asian group life, whether it be a metaphor for aspects of the experience of wet rice cultivation, the origins of life in the slime, or of creatures moving from sea to land, or simply slum life in a Third World city. In Sardono's later *The Sorceress of Dirah*, the images of interlinked horizontal bodies of circles of men performing the Balinese *kecak* dance, interwoven by the weaving traces of a Barong dragon symbol, and in the juxtaposed images of the digging of oneself into the earth, followed by the emergence of Dewi Sri, the rice goddess—we have intimations of fertility arising not only out of labour and the soil, but out of the very presence of the group. This notion is reinforced by the subsequent image in part four of *The Sorceress of Dirah*, of a great chain of linked couples approaching the altar of the Sukuh temple, images that suggest a collective encounter with a transpersonal experience of the mystery of creation. In *Poetry Cannot Be Buried*, set in Aceh, the most western province of Indonesia, we see that in the face of impending execution by the state, there is a search by each imprisoned individual for solidarity in the group, using *didong*—a traditional sung form of interactive solidarity-making—to keep their spirits alive.

The phenomena examined in this chapter have broad philosophical implications, best summed up in the statement by the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, quoted as an epigraph at the opening of this chapter, in which he rejects any concept of the self, or its incarnation, as simply the 'transcendental operation of a subject', arguing that through maternity, vulnerability, apprehension 'the sensible experience of the body is already and from the start incarnate'. In all three films examined in this chapter, and in the habitus they imply, it is as though we have a kind of symbolic

literalization of Levinas' statement—in opposition to the tradition of individualism within European, British and American philosophy, notably in answer to positions exemplified by Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am')—that 'In this plot I am bound to others before being tied to my body.'[38]

To some extent my discussion here is a little premature. I began with a description of body language in the avant-garde short, *Meta Ekologi*, arguing that while it parodies and exaggerates group body language, it also celebrates it. Subsequently, in my discussions of the films *The Sorceress of Dirah* and *Poetry Cannot Be Buried*, I have turned to phenomena that are more traditional, exploring group body language in two examples of regional performance forms, finding similarities in body language over the two. But I am now affirming the possibilities of similarities in body language arising not simply from dance styles and performance forms, but from a shared body language and—while accepting that there would still inevitably be considerable differences across the archipelago—suggesting there is present what might in general terms be called a habitus, which broadly speaking includes a common, group-oriented body language.

Indeed, what I will do in the next chapter is to develop arguments from a range of different texts that suggest a group body language widely found across the archipelago and maybe a little beyond, which, in addition to its relative uniqueness, has some quite plausibly inter-related features. One of the questions I will be asking is the question of what kind of group body language exists outside of these dance forms, which points to a distinctive habitus, and how this is observable in films? Second, is one always in a group situation or are there points where one moves out of it—for example, in the bonding that occurs in the creation of a heterosexual relationship? And, third, to what extent are Indonesians aware of what I would call 'a body language of non-institutionalized group identity', and is it ever subject to critique? In addressing these questions in the next chapter I will be exploring texts from a range of different eras and a range of different media, but primarily I will be concentrating on popular feature films.

[38] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being: Or, Beyond Essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1981, 76.

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CHAPTER 6

Body Language: From Wall Reliefs and Painting to Popular Narrative Film

This chapter examines body language, primarily in some Indonesian feature films, as a way of consolidating the arguments presented in the previous chapter about 'the body language of non-institutionalized group identity', but also as a way of addressing a number of emerging related issues. The chapter begins by examining a mid-nineteenth-century Javanese painting to argue that a similar contrast in this painting between Javanese body language and that of Dutch military figures is found in Teguh Karya's acclaimed film about the Java War, *November 1828*, completed in 1979. The chapter then moves to look at a recent teen movie, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (2002), arguing that the body language of a twenty-first-century Jakarta girl gang has some similarities with body language in the wall reliefs in the galleries of the huge ninth-century Buddhist *stupa* known as Candi Borobudur, in Central Java. In this teen movie a further question arises as to the movement of an individual, the young woman Cinta, from absorption in a same-gender peer group to the forming of a heterosexual couple. This movement from same-sex group bonding to heterosexual couple is also studied in the 1982 film *Roro Mendut*, where it can be shown how deliberately the director lays out visually this transition from group orientation to a couple made up of two individuals. The chapter then takes a different tack, in its conclusion examining ways in which the writer-director Nya Abbas Akup mocked the conformity that can arise in group situations, in his (suppressed) political allegory about the power struggle launched by Suharto against Sukarno in the mid 1960s, *Matt Dower* (1969).

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Body Language as a Cultural Contrast in a Nineteenth-Century Javanese Painting: Raden Saleh's *Diponegoro Captured at Magelang*

In my discussion of the avant-garde films *Meta Ekologi*, *Sorceress of Dirah* and *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan*, I have argued that we find in these works evidence of strongly group-oriented behaviour and body language, arising from a fundamental comprehension of human identity as group based, and expressive of an underlying spirit of community. This group body language arises from something more than the use of institutions to organize humans into groups, but is based in the body language out of which the individual is constituted and grows. This is not all that surprising given that such phenomena have been noted in a number of significant anthropological works. The question is, how does one describe it and conceptualize it further? At this point I wish to extend my discussion historically into the past, taking as the basis for discussion a mid-nineteenth-century painting in oils by the Javanese artist Raden Saleh, the first Indonesian to be trained in Western figural painting, a work in which we can find body languages of Western military officers of the Dutch army contrasted with the body language of Javanese.

The painting is a dynamic portrait of Prince Diponegoro, the rebel leader in the Java War (1825–30), captured by the Dutch after being invited by them to attend a 'peace conference' at Magelang in Central Java in March 1830. Diponegoro was subsequently sent into exile, and held with other family members in a Dutch fort in Makassar in South Sulawesi until his death in 1855. The painting, known as *Diponegoro's Capture at Magelang*, was completed in 1857 in Batavia and subsequently presented to the Dutch king in gratitude for the support the king had earlier given to Saleh. Saleh had travelled to Holland to be trained in the arts of painting at the invitation of the Dutch king. He became well known in a number of European countries, and on his return to Java was a notable figure in nineteenth-century Batavia.[1] The Java War was a war in which Prince Diponegoro led Javanese forces against Dutch in the Jogjakarta region, a war which, it is argued, stemmed initially from conflicts within the Jogjakarta court, but gathered momentum as a form of resistance to

[1]For an account of Raden Saleh's life and work, see the comprehensive study by Werner Kraus, *Raden Saleh: The Beginning of Modern Indonesian Painting*, Jakarta, Goethe Institut Indonesia, 2012.

Dutch colonialism at a time of the consolidation of a heavily taxing, colonial, military bureaucratic state on Java, on a model earlier recommended by Stamford Raffles at the time of the British interregnum in Java during the Napoleonic wars. In the 1820s Java was beginning to feel the full impact of colonization by a foreign power. Although the Dutch had been in Java since the early seventeenth century, with military forces intervening in local politics, and a base in the fort town of Batavia (established in 1619), their presence was officially an activity of a trading company, the Dutch East India Company, rather than of the Dutch nation-state.

Later in this chapter I will develop this cultural contrast further with a discussion of Teguh Karya's film *November 1828*, which also deals with the Java War, and which was filmed only shortly after the Raden Saleh painting was returned to Indonesia, presented as a gift to the Indonesian people by the Dutch Queen in 1978. Both the painting and the film portray encounters between Javanese and Dutch, and represent them as separate groups. The link between the painting and the film, for the purposes of this discussion, is the visual representation of these two peoples, Dutch military and Javanese, which makes it possible to develop an argument about how one might read cultural differences visually.

The painting was made in 1857, six years after Raden Saleh returned from Europe. Peter Carey, Diponegoro's biographer, has provided an account of the origins and historical contexts of the painting. As Carey explains, 'the painting shows General de Kock standing on the steps of the Residency pointing Dipanagara towards the carriage which was to take him to Semarang on the first stage of his journey into exile'.[2] Behind de Kock and slightly below him stands his son-in-law and Adjutant, Major de Stuers, who is to accompany Diponegoro. One of Diponegoro's official wives, probably Raden Ayu Retnaningsih, lies at his feet. Diponegoro's second eldest son stands, with face covered by his hand, just behind Diponegoro to the left. A detailed account of the origins of the painting, and of the historical circumstances it depicts, is to be found in a subsequent article by Carey.[3] Dutch experts believe the painting to be modelled

[2] Peter B.R. Carey, *Babad Dipanagara: An Account of the Outbreak of the Java War (1825–1830)*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1981, 232.

[3] Peter B.R. Carey, 'Raden Saleh, Dipanagara and the Painting of the Capture of Dipanagara at Magĕlang (28 March 1830)', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 55 (1) (242), 1982, 1–25.

Fig. 6.1 *Diponegoro Captured at Magelang*, Raden Saleh's painting, completed in 1857, of the capture at a so-called 'peace conference' of Prince Diponegoro, the leader of the Javanese forces opposing the Dutch in the Java War (1825–30) (Courtesy of Susanne Erhards)

on an earlier, similar work by the Dutch artist Nicolaas Pieneman. Of the difference between the two paintings, Carey writes:

> Whereas Pieneman's painting is rather stiff and formal, Saleh's is animated by an atmosphere of sadness and drama, in which the stern attitudes of the Dutch officers contrast strongly with the grieving faces of Dipanagara's followers.[4]

The painting represents two groups: the Dutch officers who have taken Diponegero into captivity, and stand around him on the porch in a position of elevation; and Diponegoro's Javanese supporters who watch from below in sorrowful veneration as their leader is about to depart (Fig. 6.1). In its depiction of the Dutch officers on the porch, the painting makes use of some long-standing conventions of European (more specifically Dutch) group portraiture. Like members of a Dutch militia company, or

[4] Ibid., 1–2.

Amsterdam burghers in a seventeenth-century portrait by Frans Hals or Rembrandt, the uniformed Dutch military stand in poses as though frozen for this historic moment of the painting. More important than the stiff military postures of their bodies are their eyes, which gaze out, seeing nothing, their faces composed only to receive the gazes of the viewers of the painting, and perhaps the gazes of the subjugated Javanese. The effect, certainly from the perspective of today, is almost comic and subversive.

I want to ask the question as to how we would define these Dutch officers as a group. As a group, they are primarily linked together institutionally, as army men. Their uniforms express at once their differences of rank and their uniformity of purpose as military men charged with governing, controlling and administering the colony. They are thus linked together as men by a hierarchical system of bureaucratic organization and military domination. The status of this position is reinforced visually by their place of authority on the porch.

While in the full painting there are some 15 Dutch officers discernible on this porch at Magelang, only four of the group are given prominence visually. Hence, while we have on the porch a group portrait, and the group is defined institutionally, only four individuals are allowed to stand out prominently. What I am going to argue is that the effect of the poses, and of the isolation of four individuals within this group portrait, is to underline and foreground certain aspects of Western values. I am really attempting an analysis of the cultural implications of these poses, and I am suggesting that the question of how the group is established as a group is not simply an aesthetic question of the dynamics of the composition, which is the way that most Western art historians discuss Dutch group portraiture.[5] Rather, it is a question also of how different cultures establish groups. The effect within the group portrait of isolating the four individuals is to underline the individuality, the psychological depth, the separateness (indeed the isolation) of the four figures, making them stand for the group as a whole, and implicitly marking this individuality and isolation as Western values—values not accorded to the Javanese.

Visually this complex effect of separateness within the institutionally defined group is achieved in a number of ways. It is partly achieved by

[5] See, for example, Jakob Rosenberg, Seymour Slive and E.H. ter Kuile, *Dutch Art and Architecture: 1600 to 1800*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, Chapters 4 and 5; and Kenneth Clark, *An Introduction to Rembrandt*, London, John Murray, 1978, 111.

the weight and gravity of the expressions of de Kock and de Steurs—whose faces are fully revealed, front on, with no shadow, as though one has access to the full depth and authority of their personalities—and in the expression of the two less important figures on either side of the left hand pillar. Also it is an effect of their poses: the gazes that see nothing, the bureaucratic mask-like demeanour, which expresses the weight and responsibilities of office. Finally, it is an effect of their positions within the total composition of the group on the porch. Picked out by early morning sunlight, and foregrounded at the front of the porch, flanking the figure of Diponegoro, the Dutch officers de Kock and de Steurs and the two other officers are placed against a background of less differentiated and poorly lit figures, and separated from each other by Diponegoro, by the pillars, and by the background figures. A more detailed analysis would illustrate further how the colours of their clothes, and certain architectural features, particularly the pillars, reinforce this effect.

Let us now examine the central figure of Diponegoro himself. While de Kock is presented full face—as though the full face is a transparent window to the individual personality—Diponegoro is presented in half face, virtually in profile. The profile is tense and rebellious, but the overall sense of both a very active and inward person is expressed as much by the rest of the body, the expression of which the face and head completes. In the two Javanese figures also on the porch (both grieving, with hands or arms covering the face) again the face is relatively less important for the total expression of the person.

The Javanese assembled in the courtyard below are less formally presented than the group portrait of the Dutch. Their postures are more varied: some stand, some kneel and some squat with legs folded (*duduk bersila*). They do not adopt the characteristic postures of European group portraiture, which in the case of the Dutch resulted in the sightless posing noted above. While this may be seen as a result of the way they are situated, looking towards Diponegoro, neither is Diponegoro himself in a customary pose of a figure in European group portraiture. The facial expressions of the Javanese are also quite different. Their expressions are generally more animated, or they gaze reverently at their captured leader, or appear to converse with one another. Few are presented full face.

If we ask how we might define the Javanese as a group, there are a number of considerations. Their clothes, while clearly signifying differences in rank and status (some wear the clothes of Javanese aristocrats), are not simply the apparel of a military institution, but also signify, in many

cases, religious commitments (to Islam). As a group, they are not defined in the singular institutional terms of military power that the Dutch are, for dress and posture signify spiritual discipline as well. Perhaps most importantly, none of the Javanese figures in the courtyard are singled out and given prominence in the way that the four Dutch are singled out. In other words, the degree of definition given to each of the 18 or so Javanese in the courtyard is more equal than that accorded to the 15 Dutch above them. This does not mean that individuality or psychological depth is not there in the Javanese figures, but rather it is less emphasized, and it is less connected with isolation and separation. Indeed, we might speak of a communal (rather than individual) psychological depth registered in the faces of the Javanese, as though psychological depth in them is partly the depth of group solidarity. This effect is reinforced, of course, by the group solidarity induced by the style of sitting or kneeling, which two-thirds of the figures in the foreground have adopted.

I will draw some general conclusions by asking how the painting relates to Dutch group portraiture of the seventeenth century. A most striking feature of the Raden Saleh painting, on analysis, is the incorporation of a Dutch group portrait (in the figures of the Dutch on the porch) into the context of the scene of Diponegoro's Javanese supporters witnessing his arrest and departure into exile. Seventeenth-century portraits of Haarlem militiamen or members of Amsterdam trade guilds are never contextualized in the way that the Dutch officers in this portrait are. Nor is there a context of this kind in Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*. The Raden Saleh painting of Diponegoro's capture creates a contradiction between the codes of Dutch group portraiture, where the subjects pose for the painter, or hold their faces for the gaze of the viewer or look at each other, but there is nothing else in the painting to be seen besides themselves. Hence this painting implicitly comments on the institutionalized blindness of colonialism, using an established Dutch genre to do so.[6] As well, the codes and conventions of Dutch group portraiture are modified in this colonial context, and this is most evident in the way that the bureaucratic mask-like pose of the key figures replaces the warmth, conviviality or pointed severity of paintings by Frans Hals or Rembrandt. At the same time, the European

[6] Further anti-colonial aspects of this painting are explored in Werner Kraus, 'Raden Saleh's Interpretation of the Arrest of Diponegoro: An Example of Indonesian "Proto-nationalist" Modernism', *Archipel* 69, 2005, 285.

idea of the individual face as signifier of personal depth is still maintained in the full frontality of the four main Dutch figures in their uniforms, while the Javanese are for the most part presented obliquely, with the whole body being equally important for the total expression of character, thus implying a less dualistic attitude to the head and body than is found in the portrait of the Dutch. Hence the two groups, the Dutch and Javanese, are not primarily organized aesthetically, but culturally. One is led to question whether the cultural contrast in the painting is felt to pertain to the special conditions of colonialism, or whether a Javanese might see the imprint of their institutions as permanently internalized by all Westerners.

Given the analysis provided here of the cultural contrast between the Dutch and the Javanese, and indeed the deep sorrow expressed in the painting, it is intriguing that this painting of *Diponegoro Captured at Magelang* was conceived as a gift to the Dutch king to express 'gratitude' for all he had done for Raden Saleh in bringing him to Holland to be trained in European skills.

Contrasting Body Languages in an Indonesian Historical Film: Teguh Karya's *November 1828*

Many of the issues explored in our discussion of Raden Saleh's painting can be further developed by an examination of a major Indonesian historical film about the Java War, *November 1828*, completed in 1979 by writer-director Teguh Karya and his Teater Populer Group (Fig. 6.2).[7] This film also encapsulates a cultural contrast in body languages, here between the Western-influenced and trained 'Indo' ('Indo' is a term for a mixed race person, part Indonesian and part Dutch) officers in the Dutch army (the most prominent among them being shown to have identified strongly with his Dutch father) and the body language of the village-based Javanese *rakyat* (common people). But in the case of this narrative film, the postulating of a strong group orientation among the Javanese in contrast to the Western individualism of the army officers, and the differences in values this implies, has implications for narrative. It means that—as we shall

[7] A lengthier and more detailed version of this discussion of *November 1828* is to be found in David Hanan, 'Film and Cultural Difference: *November 1828*', in Krishna Sen, ed., *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, Clayton, Victoria, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988, 25–47.

Fig. 6.2 The villagers rise up against the Indo-Dutch forces occupying their village in Teguh Karya's *November 1828,* completed in 1979. In the background of this production still, there are echoes of Raden Saleh's painting of Diponegoro's capture, but with the situation reversed, with Indo-Dutch forces now trapped on a porch, confronting the rising of the villagers (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

see—the differences are not confined simply to body language, as they are in Raden Saleh's painting, but result in different kinds of character type, different conceptions of agency, and contrasting uses of dramaturgy.

The film does not concentrate on the charismatic Prince Diponegoro, who does not appear in the film at all. Rather the film focuses on resistance offered by villagers in a village occupied by a Dutch military unit, who, on arrival, decide to base themselves there, and build a small fort (known as *benteng stelsel*) to contain local village resistance. The main presence of the Javanese leadership in the film is via the community's links with Diponegoro's deputy, Sentot Prawirodirdjo, who appears briefly twice in this lengthy film. Much of the first half of the film is taken up with the

interrogation of a local village elder over his knowledge of the whereabouts of the Javanese leaders Diponegoro and the latter's deputy Sentot, and the conflicts caused by this.

The Dutch army unit, part of a company whose Dutch leaders we see in the pre-credit sequence, comprises an Indo leader, Captain de Borst, various other Indo officers, together with various Indo and fully Indonesian troops. The film contrasts the attitudes and body language of the strongly Dutch-influenced leadership of the Dutch unit, with that of the Javanese villagers, and even with some of their Indonesian troops, so that the film is as much a cultural contrast as it is a film evoking grassroots resistance to colonialism in the early nineteenth century.

Before embarking on the production of *November 1828*, members of the Jakarta-based Teater Populer collective, including writer-director Teguh Karya, lead players, designers and the lighting cameraman, made a study of Dutch painting, concentrating upon, among other things, 'Rembrandt lighting'.[8] The results in the film suggest that their research interests extended to include the posture, stance and bearing of the protagonists, gestures, arrangement of groups, and facial expressions and gazes, as well as characteristic uses of light to express 'European' personality. Noticeable too, in the film, is the way in which the Indo groups, together with de Borst, make use of available elevated spaces—verandas and small porches, as well as scaffolds—to display themselves as a status group, distinct from, but dominating, both officially and informally, the Javanese. It is interesting too, that the painting by Raden Saleh of Diponegoro's capture at Magelang was presented to the Indonesian people as a gift from the Dutch royal family and placed in the Museum Pusat in Jakarta in l978, shortly prior to the making of *November 1828*. The question here is not one of the directness of influence of the painting on the film. Clearly much research went into the making of *November 1828*, and various sources were used. The real issue is that many of the terms used to analyse the Raden Saleh painting may also be applied to the film, for both explore, make use of and recontextualize similar systems of codification. The point at which film and painting intersect is their common exploration of the relation between personality, institution and group, both among Westerners (or Westernized Indos) and among the Javanese.

[8] In February 1985 I had the opportunity to discuss the use of 'Rembrandt lighting' in some scenes in *November 1828*, jointly with the film's director, Teguh Karya, and lighting cameraman, Tantra Suryadi.

Given the foregoing argument, we can see that one way for an artist—who wants to define his society in culturally specific terms—to define foreign influence in his society is not simply to define that foreign influence in his own society's terms, but to define it in terms of the codes and representational systems of that foreign culture, as Raden Saleh and Teguh Karya do in their use of Dutch group portraiture. On the matter of the Indonesian cultural specificity of the film, Teguh Karya made the following comment at the time of the film's premiere:

> This film was completed rather hurriedly, in order to be shown at the Indonesian Film Festival at Palembang. But this lack of 'finish' you spoke of was not without purpose. We did not want the film to be oriented towards the dramatic values of the West. There are various kinds of dramaturgy. There is the dramaturgy of the *wayang*, the *randai*, the *ketoprak*. A dramaturgy that is suitable for Indonesian films is something for which, up till now, we are still searching.[9] (my translation)

Here we should note that Teguh places an explicit emphasis on finding an Indonesian dramaturgy, as yet not fully discovered, and that in this sense the film should be seen as experimental and unfinished. But as I argued in relation to Raden Saleh's painting, these works combine and contrast European visual codes and dramatic codes with emergent kinds of 'Indonesian' representation.

My discussion of *November 1828* will be primarily concerned with the various ways in which it gives definition to the group orientation of the Javanese, in contrast to the individualism of the West, and the way this is expressed in body language and imagery. It will also address the kinds of 'psychological depth' (and the degree of priority given to psychological depth) in the depiction of the various Indo and Javanese characters in the film, especially in the depiction of the 'leaders' of the various groups—issues I have already raised with regard to the Raden Saleh painting. The issue can be widened beyond this to include ways in which Western dramaturgy has been deployed to depict the Westernized characters, so different dramaturgies are deployed in relation to the differently conceptualized groups in the film. However, in order to facilitate my subsequent argument, it is necessary to give an exposition of the film's plot.

[9] Teguh Karya, interviewed by Salim Said in *Tempo*, Jakarta, 19 May 1979, 46. *November 1828* was filmed on location in a village south of Jogjakarta over nearly a five-month period, from November 1978 to April 1979. For an article on the experiences of the numerous villagers, who fortuitously got work on the film at a time when their crops had failed, see '*November 1828*: Kenang Kenangan', *Tempo*, 7 April 1979, 25.

Synopsis of *November 1828*

In the second half of 1828, Dutch forces have experienced a series of ambushes west of Jogjakarta. The film opens with a Dutch column, in pursuit of Diponegoro and his deputy Sentot, entering the village of Sambiroto to find that the rebel forces have fled. Questions are asked as to who had informed the rebels of the impending Dutch raid. Kromoludiro, a respected peasant, is accused by the *Demang* (Javanese village head), and taken into captivity by the Dutch forces. Captain de Borst and his men take charge of the village, set up a fort in the yard of Kromoludiro's house, making Kromoludiro's family prisoners. It becomes clear that de Borst is an Indo (he has a Dutch father and an Indonesian mother) as are many of the men he is leading.

Kromoludiro is regarded as a leader in the village, because he has supported poor peasants oppressed by the *Demang*. Some young men of the village, connected with the local Islamic teacher, Kyai Karto Sardjan, flee and join forces with Sentot. These include Djarot, the suitor of Laras, Kromoludiro's daughter. Much of the film depicts the attempt by de Borst to make Kromoludiro divulge the location of Sentot's headquarters. De Borst's tactics strain the loyalties of his Indo officers, especially van Aken. Village opposition to de Borst is dramatized by the poisoning of two of his men by food brought by village women, food interfered with by Djaduk, the stable hand in Kromoludiro's house. De Borst blames Bondan, the *Demang*'s son for the poisoning, and in the subsequent chase, Bondan is shot by de Borst's men, as is Kyai Sardjan, as he goes to Bondan's aid. As de Borst expedites the interrogation of Kromoludiro, his lieutenant, van Aken, comes forward with the statement that it was he, not Kromoludiro, who had supplied information to Diponegoro's forces. Kromoludiro abuses de Borst, attempting to distract him and prevent van Aken talking. In a fury, de Borst turns on Kromoludiro and shoots him. As Kromoludiro dies, there is a cut to Sentot's encampment, where Sentot is seen briefly conferring with the young men from the village. Van Aken is arrested, and in the ensuing arguments between him and de Borst, de Borst's moral emptiness is demonstrated. The difference between the two men is also shown in flashbacks in the film, where van Aken is shown to identify with his

Javanese mother, rather than his Dutch father, and where de Borst follows the role model of his Dutch officer father.

At this point a new energy and spirit enters the film with the arrival of a dance troupe. The dancers, led by Bambang Sumpeno, organize a performance of a traditional horse dance (*jatilan*) with masks, which de Borst attends, in the company of Laras under duress.

This stirring dance climaxes with the female lead dancer, who has been passed a pistol, emerging from the centre of the whirling figures—her mask now removed—to shoot at de Borst, who is wounded (Fig. 6.3). The Dutch retaliate, taking the dancers prisoner. Sensing de Borst's growing vengefulness, a maidservant asks Djaduk to mobilize the villagers.

Fig. 6.3 The *jatilan* dance, in *November 1828*, that culminates with the masked female dancer attempting to assassinate the Indo-Dutch leader, Captain de Borst, using a pistol handed across to her, through the dance, by the other dancers (Courtesy of Teater Populer and Interstudio Jakarta)

De Borst attempts to humiliate the dancer Bambang Sumpeno, by placing him half-buried in the soil, in a cage. Urged on by the cries of Bambang before he is shot by the enraged de Borst, the villagers then attack the fort. As the attack develops, Sentot and his forces arrive, and help complete the overthrow of de Borst and the Dutch forces. The village is liberated, at least for the time being, in a war in which the Dutch were eventually victorious.

There are some basic observations that need to be made about this narrative.[10] On the Javanese side, the displacement of the narrativized events in *November 1828* away from the major Javanese historical figures, such as Diponegoro and Sentot, opens up a space for the common village people—the *rakyat*—to become the real protagonists of the film, and decisively gives *November 1828* the character of a populist work. Indeed, in Indonesia early reviews of the film recognized that the film was really concerned with the '*rakyat Jawa*' (the ordinary Javanese people).[11] And here a primary issue, for my purposes, is the issue of leadership. Among the village Javanese in the film there is no single leader. Where some leadership focus is provided by a comparatively strong figure, such as Kyai Karto Sardjan, his actions are secondary (or background) to the initiatives of his followers in the foreground. With regard to the Javanese in the film, an analysis of the film in terms of Propp's functions of the hero would not be able to proceed, for there is no single hero among them.[12]

[10]The screenplay of *November 1828* was published at about the same time as the film was released. See Teguh Karya, *Skenario: November 1828*, Jakarta, Sinar Harapan, 1979.

[11]'Film Terbaik 1979: Bukan Sesuatu yang Spektakuler', *Tempo*, 19 May 1979, 45. The historian Ricklefs has commented that the Java War was the 'last stand of the Javanese aristocratic elite'. See M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1200*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2008, 142. But both Ricklefs and Diponegoro's biographer, Peter Carey, have emphasized also the populist elements in the war. Carey writes: 'The ever more urgent reports of Dutch officials regarding the crisis in the Javanese countryside in the early 1820s all pointed to one conclusion—a major popular uprising was imminent. Only the timing and leadership were unclear. The combination of the land tax, poor harvests, the 1821 cholera epidemic, the tollgates and the renting of estates to Europeans had turned south-central Java into a powder keg. The popular disturbances of 1817–1822 with their quirky millenarian hopes were a symptom of this deepening despair.' See Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of an Old Order in Java*, Leiden, KLTV Press, 2008, 504.

[12]Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1977.

A corollary of this is that the central figure of de Borst among the Indos is not complemented within the structure of the film by a central figure among the village Javanese. Since their unifying figure, Sentot, is largely absent, and hardly a protagonist, among the Javanese different kinds of leadership are taken up from moment to moment, as the occasion arises, by different individuals, a progress rather like that of the pistol that is passed around among the members of the dance troupe during the horse dance, until the female lead dancer receives it and fires it at de Borst. As can be discerned by reading the plot synopsis of *November 1828*, political initiatives against the Dutch are taken by the following Javanese characters in this order: Kromoludiro, Kyai Karto Sardjan, young men of the *padepokan* (community centre), Djaduk and possibly the young women of the village, van Aken, female lead dancer, Uti the maid-servant, Bambang Sumpeno, Djaduk, Sentot. This aspect of the film's narrative organization, wherein among the Javanese a single key protagonist or 'hero' is replaced by many protagonists, can of course be seen as partly a consequence of the dispersal or death (in the case of Kromoludiro) of those who might have played a larger role. However, it can also be seen as indicative of the populist emphasis of *November 1828*, wherein it is the many small heroes who put up resistance, and make the revolution. A narrative organization of this kind is also a metaphor for decentralized cooperativeness, and is related to the film's communal and cooperative view of the Javanese people (Fig. 6.4).

Fig. 6.4 Javanese villagers, temporarily captured, squat, surrounding the cage in which the leader of the dance troupe is imprisoned, as a community, in spirit, expressing their resistance to the occupying Dutch-Indo forces, in *November 1828* (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

If we agree that, in the film, the Javanese are more communal in some sense, we may ask, how is the cultural difference of the Westernized, half-Dutch, Indo officers expressed visually, in contrast to the Javanese, in terms of the formal construction and pictorial organization of the film?

Semiotic studies of film make a distinction between, on the one hand codes that are specific to the cinema, and on the other hand, codes that may be found organizing discourse within a film, but which are not specific to film.[13] In answering the question of how cultural difference is presented visually, if one analyses the presentation of the Indos (Dutch-Indonesian soldiers) in contrast to the presentation of the Javanese, one finds that there is no difference at the level of the cinematic code of framing, though there is possibly in terms of composition. For instance, the 'communal' Javanese are not always shown in groups, nor are the Indos shown predominantly in individual shots. Rather—while in fact the Javanese are often shown in groups (more so than occurs in *Max Havelaar*, another film about Dutch colonialism in nineteenth-century Java, filmed by the Dutch director, Fons Rademakers, on location in Indonesia in the mid 1970s)—the Indos, as members of a military column, are also often shown in group shots. And there are plenty of shots where Javanese characters are shown individually. It should be noted that whether it is the Javanese or the Indos who are being filmed, expressive use is made of the laterally extended cinemascope screen in framing shots.

So the cultural contrast between the Indo-Dutch forces and the Javanese is not produced by differing uses of the cinematic code of framing, but by other means. What are these other means? Here we return to our earlier discussion of the Raden Saleh painting of Diponegoro's capture. For an analysis of a significant number of scenes from the film would show that the problem of the cultural contrast is solved by the adoption, in the case of the Indo-Dutch group, of the non-cinematically specific pictorial code of Dutch group portrait painting as the primary means of organizing the Indo characters in screen space.

Numerous examples may be given of this use of the codes of Dutch painting in the representation of the Indos. The most striking are the long tracking shots—back and forth—along the Indo group of officers, regis-

[13] See Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema*, The Hague, Mouton, 1974, 34–5 and passim.

tering their reactions to de Borst's unexpected shooting of Kromoludiro. These shots, with the camera moving but the Indo figures standing motionless, are an excellent instance of the dominant compositional mode of the film in the treatment of the Indos. This group portrait compositional effect can occur in the most surprising of contexts. For example, there are numerous shots of de Borst in the foreground or at the side of the frame, intimidating a Javanese, or threatening Kromoludiro's wife and children, while the Indo officers stand around behind or beside him, striking the prestigious poses of Dutch group portrait painting.

The implications of such poses are much the same in the film as they are in the painting. These group compositions simultaneously suggest the isolation and the individuality of the members of the institutionally defined group (Fig. 6.5). Frequent use of full face provides transparent 'access' (like a window) to the unproblematic depth and seriousness of the personality, which is concomitant with a bureaucratic mask-like face ('the institutional gaze') that expresses the cares of office but which also refuses to see. Finally, there is virtually no expression that recognizes ambiguity.

How then is the communality of the Javanese defined in the film? Here my arguments might be seen to relate to discourses among anthropologists and historians about the nature of the Javanese village, and particularly about the importance of *gotong royong* (mutual support) within it,

Fig. 6.5 A shot from *November 1828*, typical of the way the Dutch and the Indo-Dutch forces are framed and positioned as a group of individuals—in a manner reminiscent of Dutch group portraiture—and united only by their institutional roles (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

about which there has been considerable debate.[14] Because in this village of Sambiroto, in *November 1828*, there is an alliance between the exploitative headman, the *Demang*, and the Dutch, and no other form of internal village governance is shown, the system of village government is not a centre of resistance against colonialism, nor a means of organizing *gotong royong*. Apart from Kromoludiro, support for others and resistance to colonialism is primarily centred on the *padepokan* organized by the Islamic leader Kyai Karto Sardjan, and it is the young men from the *padepokan* who are the main continuing contact with Sentot's forces, after Kromoludiro's capture.

A *padepokan* is an informal centre in a community—sometimes associated with Islam, more often with the arts—where the young can learn from their elders. Hence, it appears to be a voluntary form of education through tradition. In *November 1828* the informal nature of the *padepokan* and the vitality and keenness of its members imply that, far from there being inter-generational hostility between the young and their elders, this form of education through tradition is a dynamic aspect of village life, pointing the way to the future. In *November 1828*, while the *padepokan* is clearly an Islamic centre, its purposes are presented by no means as purely concerned with the cause of Islam. This is strikingly suggested in the scene early in the film where we witness, through the fence, the men of the *padepokan* dancing and chanting together. The images here suggest powerful unity in opposition to the Dutch, based on communal solidarity and folk traditions. In this dance, the accompanying musical instrument is Islamic—a *toebangan* (drum)—but the melody and songs are Javanese.[15] We can say then that, in *November 1828*, Islam is an alternative centre to village institutions, facilitating resistance to the Dutch, but that Javanese elements are relocated inside an Islamic institution.

Given that exploitation is explicitly shown in the village of Sambiroto in *November 1828*, but that forms of democratic village governance and association are not, in what sense can one describe the village as communal? Here I would argue that 'communality' is more a feature of the mode of presentation of character, and also of the body language of non-

[14]The debates around *gotong royong* are summarized in my discussion of the film *Tjambuk Api* in Chap. 4.

[15]I wish to thank the Melbourne based musician and dancer, Poedijono, formerly of Monash University, for information about the instruments and music in this scene.

institutionalized group solidarity, rather than being located in any clearly enunciated social structure in the film.

In the first place, as with the depiction of Diponegoro's followers in the Raden Saleh painting, the Javanese in *November 1828* are made to stand out from one another less, and are less individualized compared with the way in which de Borst stands out from the other Indo officers. Certainly some Javanese characters are prominent: among the women Kromoludiro's daughter Laras, and his wife, who is unnamed; among the men, Kromoludiro, Bambang Sumpeno and Djaduk the stable hand. But that prominence is not one that enjoins a passive role on others. Hence arises that singular narrative structure of the film where, among the Javanese, initiative is passed from one to another, as in a relay race. Moreover, the importance of a character's role in the action is not related to the amount of actual screen time or to any visual or dramatic prominence given to the character. Hence the paradoxical prominence of Djaduk, the stable hand, whose role in the story many viewers do not notice, at least on a first viewing.

If one examines the film in detail one finds that there are basically two modes of character presentation reserved for the Javanese, which result in a character being defined primarily via his relation to the community. One is to show a character as manifesting in his personality internalized social values of the community. The other is to locate that character proxemically (in terms of physical positioning) primarily in relation to groups. An example of the first is Kromoludiro, an example of the second is Djarot.

Kromoludiro cannot be shown in physical proximity in relation to other groups of Javanese, because he has been captured and is isolated. But Kromoludiro is still not defined by his personal history and psychology. Rather he is defined in terms of the way in which he has internalized a sense of his roles and responsibility towards other people: his attachment to his family, to other villagers and to the group life of the community. Kromoludiro's individual personality is replaced by his absorption within his social role. His relation to that community is strong because he is represented in the film as having absorbed values of collective responsibility and caring. Thus, rather than having an individual psychological depth, which exists in some space of its own, Kromoludiro's psychological strengths are related to his sense of his relation to his community.

We find a similar lack of narrative interest in the representation of individual character in the depiction of Djarot, the young suitor to Laras, though here it is done in a different way. Djarot is given no detailed char-

acter or personal history, apart from the scenes of courtship with Laras. He is defined simply as one of the group of young men from the *padepokan*, and it is in their company that he is usually seen. Indeed, formally his character is established by him breaking from this group of young men, with whom he is seen dancing and chanting in the *padepokan*, and running to speak to Laras. Thus his character is first established communally, and only subsequently to that does he become an individual in the action. Even where a character has a strongly individual personality, as does, for example Bambang Sumpeno, the leader of the dance troupe, that strong individuality is still primarily other-directed and put to the service of the group, channelling its anarchic energy into the community, in order to galvanize its members.[16]

The scene referred to earlier of the young men of the village dancing and chanting in the garden of the *padepokan* should be examined in further detail. The point in the film at which this scene occurs, its own internal organization, and the way it is framed, all, in different ways, contribute to its significance, and make of this formal ritual song and dance—through the symbolism of its body language—an emblem or pictorial allegory by which we see through to a type of physical and psychic group identity and solidarity the men share. The scene occurs early in the film: de Borst has just ordered the setting up of a fort in Kromoludiro's house. The camera slowly follows Laras as she goes in search of her friend Djarot. The sound of the chanting is heard on the sound track. Laras peers through a hole in the fence into the adjoining garden of the *padepokan*, where the young men, formed up in rows facing one another, rhythmically chant and dance (Fig. 6.6). This is the first scene in the film that is not dominated by de Borst and the Dutch military. It is positioned in the film to evoke a sense of the Javanese and their group solidarity as something quite apart from, and in opposition to, the Dutch. The symbolic implications of this scene are manifold, and its relation to customary cinematic practice is unusual. The moment of Laras peering through the fence is a conventional stylistic

[16]The figure of Bambang Sumpeno in the film would appear to correspond to a type of *jago* or *warok* from the Ponorogo area, described by Onghokham thus: 'The Warok was a leader of a wandering group of masked dancers. They were all known for their great strength and agility, and the Warok leader was respected for his magical and spiritual powers as well. One of the masked dancers had a mask of a tiger crowned by a tower of peacock feathers.' See Onghokham, 'The Residency of Madiun: *Priyayi* and Peasant in the Nineteenth Century', PhD Dissertation, Yale 1975, 67.

Fig. 6.6 The young men from Kyai Karto Sardjan's *padepokan* (Islamic community centre) chanting and dancing together, as seen from the point of view of Laras, early in *November 1828* (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

figure found in many previous wooing scenes, through the ages, whether in plays, novels or films. Yet this act of peering through the fence, from the space occupied by the Dutch to the space occupied by the Javanese has, for the viewer, a voyeuristic dimension as well. For it is not just Laras looking through a fence, it is a space of cultural difference, so there are two levels of perception for the viewer. Hence there is a momentary sense of peering through to something about the Javanese cultural formation that is separate and quite other. There is a momentary delay in which we watch the group of men from Laras' point of view, before Laras' presence is noticed. Djarot, who does not see Laras at the fence, is joyfully informed of her presence by a friend, who embraces Djarot as he moves out of the dancing group and goes to greet Laras.

In this scene the fraternal solidarity, even physical familiarity of the men, is not present in opposition to their relations with women, but as a precondition for their relations with women. This is the point of structurally integrating the scene of them dancing together, with the courting scene between Laras and Djarot, at the same time dramatizing the unorthodox nature of the perception, by giving it both a subtly voyeuristic and a subtly emblematic dimension. This sense that fraternal solidarity is a precondition for their relations with women is in contrast to what one usually finds in, for example, the Australian cinema, where in *The F.J. Holden* (1977) and in *Don's Party* (1976), 'mateship' and inter-male relationships are of

a kind which interfere with the relationships of men to women, and manifest, instead, inadequacy, fear and gender insularity.

Turning again to Javanese male characters in *November 1828*, the most original of them is Djaduk. He is patient and watchful, seemingly passive, rarely speaking, and often receding into the background, as if not to be noticed. Yet Djaduk himself, as is discernible from his careful movements and his gaze, is always noticing. Djaduk is the instigator of some major developments in the film. He acts as a go-between for Sentot's allies and the other villagers; he poisons the soldiers; he releases the horse into the village to mobilize the other villagers; and it is he who finally shoots de Borst, from up a tree, unnoticed by the others. The central role accorded to the scarcely prominent Djaduk is part of the film's populist project, and part of its critique of the highly visible de Borst. At one level one can read Djaduk's mask-like dissembling as a survival skill, perhaps developed in response to colonialism; at another level the symbolic dimensions of Djaduk in the context of communal action are multiple. Djaduk's determination to stay in the background, his seeming passivity, and his patience, are also a form of other-directedness. Instead of trying to dominate situations, he waits until they can be acted upon. His watchfulness enables him to identify where he can act. His impassive countenance and his lack of defiance provide the mask behind which he can wait. His identification with a communal goal allows him to act as a member of a team. His readiness to cooperate allows initiative to others.

November 1828 employs, at various points, systems of representation that are predominantly Western-derived (such as Dutch group portraiture) but these are recontextualized against Javanese body language, aesthetic systems and codes. We can extend the argument here from the pictorial, where we examined body language, to the dramaturgical. Here the leader of the Indo-Dutch forces, Captain de Borst, provides the most pertinent case, our final example of the cultural contrasts in this film. In the strict Aristotelian sense, de Borst is not a tragic figure, because he is not a man of noble stature, nor is he a man who is moved by the fates of those he harms. But in broad generic terms he shares certain features of tragic figures in Western drama. He is a leader, he is isolated (Oedipus, Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, the Master Builder, and the salesman Willie Loman are all isolated figures) and he suffers *hamartia*—the error of judgement of the tragic protagonist. His *hamartia* is his failure to exercise the virtue of emotional self-control. Three times de Borst fails to exercise self-control just at a point in the narrative where it is important for him to do so. But

exercise of self-control is often seen as a specifically Javanese virtue, with a complex history and ideological positioning.[17] As well, de Borst is isolated by his institutionalized position of command, and he becomes more isolated through his temperament. This isolation of the tragic protagonist is almost necessary in Western drama, because it is isolation that provides the space for the display of a complex, contradictory, inner, personal life—in the West a kind of aesthetic value in itself, as seen in the films of Ingmar Bergman in the 1960s for example (and also in much European literature and drama). In the film the climax of the exposition of de Borst's inadequacies, and his lack of human feeling, is the scene of his arguments with his comrade, van Aken, who has been arrested for siding with the Javanese. 'You are just a confused individual, worthy only to be pitied', responds van Aken. At this point, de Borst's personal history is encapsulated in a brief flashback, which provides a somewhat rudimentary account of the aetiology of his psychological disposition, explained in terms of the stronger influence of his Dutch military father compared with that of his Javanese mother (unlike van Aken, who is shown to have internalized values of his Javanese mother). Note as well here the way in which the cinemascope

[17]The Indonesian diplomat and intellectual, Soejdatmoko, has commented on the importance of self-control in Javanese life: 'A central concept in the Javanese traditional view of life is the direct relationship between the state of a person's inner self and his capacity to control his environment. Inner perfection, reached through detachment and the control of one's emotions and reactions, radiates, through the inner stillness thus acquired, to the world and influences it. And as social hierarchy is seen as a reflection of the cosmic order, one's place in the hierarchy reflects the degree of inner perfection and power one has achieved.' See Soedjatmoko, 'Indonesia: Problems and Opportunities', *Australian Outlook* 21 (3), December 1967, 266. Similar arguments have been put by Benedict Anderson in Anderson, 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', in Claire Holt, ed., *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1972, 8–9, and by Onghokham in 'The Residency of Madiun', 7. As mentioned in Chap. 2 of this book, the discourse of self-control in Indonesian film has also been emphasized by Karl Heider. See Karl G. Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 34–8 and 64–5. Nevertheless, the director of *November 1828*, Teguh Karya, characteristically, has made light of this aspect of the film saying that in writing the script he picked up on a common saying at the time the film was made: '*Jangan Emosi*' ('Don't get emotional'), personal communication, July 1988. For a recent critical discussion of ideologies of self-control in Java, and their relation to ideologies of gender, see Suzanne A. Brenner, 'Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideas of Gender and Self-control', in Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz, *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, 19–50.

frame moves in to close-up, to register the personal psychological reactions of de Borst, on the line: 'You are just a confused individual, worthy only to be pitied …', before the transition to the flashback; while as the camera pulls slowly away from his face after the flashback the emptiness at the edge of the frame emphasizes his isolation. Here the film alludes to the tragic emotions, verbally as well as visually (in the pejorative use of the word 'pity'), at the same time as it denies them to the viewer in any lasting way by moving on to evoke the populist communal experience of the Javanese dance troupe, and a quite different set of artistic traditions. As the film cuts back from the flashback and the camera then pulls back from the proud figure of the melancholy de Borst (perhaps at that moment registering a hint of self-pity), the gentle and lively *reog* music is heard in the village lane, announcing the arrival of the dancers. For the film, de Borst, as a leader, exemplifies the problems of Western individualism functioning within a colonial military bureaucratic organization that is without solidarity, and which survives only by technical superiority, consolidated organizational structure, and force. In this he provides an excellent contrast, which points up the film's interest in Javanese values of communality and solidarity.

The Transition from Incorporation in the Same-Sex Group to the Constitution of the Heterosexual Couple: *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*

Among Indonesian feature films there are a number of examples, useful to discuss at this point, where we distinguish between 'community' as manifested in social structure and conscious organization, and 'community' as expressed in more spontaneous ways, as in body language. The body language of the group discussed in most of the examples examined so far has been largely confined to images of male interaction, especially in *Meta Ekologi* and *November 1828*. The group body language discussed involves a bonding between members of the same gender, rather than between genders. In fact because Indonesia, as I am arguing, is a touch culture or a 'contact culture', there is a great deal of sophistication in the deployment of the body, both within the same-sex group and between the sexes, although in more traditional Muslim Java overt demonstrations of heterosexual intimacy or boisterous physical interaction across the genders is discouraged, much more so than in less regulated and codified contemporary Hindu Bali. Nevertheless, it will be suggested that there

is some evidence, not conclusive but certainly suggestive, that the body language of a contact culture is to be seen much earlier than in contemporary times, in the wall reliefs of the Borobudur temple in Central Java, and therefore that such a body language has been long established, as one might expect.

This section of the chapter begins with the examination of a scene of close bonding between a group of young women in an Indonesian teen movie, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* ('What's Up with Love?'), an example that testifies to the strong same-sex bonding that can occur between Indonesian teenage girls. But this film is also a heterosexual teen romance, and here I consider also the phase in the development of young people where there is a shift from absorption within their own peer and gender group—as most teenagers initially are—to a movement to the formation of a heterosexual pair, something we see ambivalently occurring in *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*

Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?, released in Jakarta in 2002, was the most popular Indonesian movie ever made up to that time. The film had a cinema audience of well over 3 million people. While the film was made to achieve commercial success, and to some extent modelled on a genre of the American teen movie (a high school teen romance), Miles Films, the team that made *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*, wanted it to contain elements that one does not find in the ordinary commercial movie made in Indonesia. A full understanding of the film shows how it deliberately weaves together commercial elements that were necessary in order for the filmmakers to survive in an industry that had all but ceased to exist, and elements that were designed to gently encourage their teenage audiences to have some political awareness, and to value traditions in their society, particularly in poetry and cinema. So both the lead characters, Cinta and Rangga, write poetry and meet through their involvement in a school-based poetry competition; the father of the boy, Rangga, has been a victim of political persecution during the New Order; there are scenes that discuss domestic violence. At the same time the filmmakers wanted the film to have some elements of Indonesian cultural identity, in particular by providing a culturally and historically specific portrait of the behaviour and codes of contemporary Indonesian teenagers, particularly teenage girls in Jakarta. This is seen in the pervasive use of the contemporary, trendy Jakarta teen language *bahasa gaul*—itself derived from Jakarta dialect or *bahasa Betawi*—by the group of teenage girls at the centre of the

film. Of course, the specificity of group interaction among Jakarta teenagers in 2002 is also present, visually, in the body language used in the film.[18]

The opening scene of *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* contains a moment of close group interaction between its main teenage girl characters who are members of the same 'girl gang'. In this scene, in which there are five young women, Cinta, who in many ways is the leader of the group, together with three young friends, comforts a fellow group member, Alya, who describes recent domestic violence, perpetrated by her father, to which both she and her mother have been subjected, resulting in serious bruising on Alya's upper back. The young women surround Alya to comfort her, creating in the scene a sustained moment of group identity and bonding, which is distinctive both in its physical closeness and in the spontaneity with which it comes into being and develops. Although in this scene the girls' gestures, and the degree of closeness and affection between them, are initially motivated by the concern to alleviate Alya's distress, the girls soon take the opportunity to reaffirm their closeness, affection and loyalty as members of a 'girl gang', moving into positions of solidarity, eventually joining their hands together while listening to a poem which Cinta has written about them, and which she now recites. At this point the four young women face the camera, squatting on the floor of Cinta's bedroom, some sitting *duduk bersila* style (that is, sitting with legs folded and crossed in front of one, in a position often adopted in moments of religious practice, whether in Buddhist meditation or Muslim prayer, but also as a sign of attention and respect at ceremonial gatherings), or in an approximation to this in what is known as a 'half-lotus position'. The four young women listen to Cinta, who faces them, reading her poem, which is about them as a group. The widescreen camera pans right, across three of the girls' faces, framed in medium close-up, then pans back across them to the fourth young woman to the left, sitting just a little apart, before tilting down and then panning across right again to show the joining of their hands. The shoulders of the two young women closest to Alya lightly touch her back, as they lean forward from behind her. The friends hold both of Alya's hands, and the hands of each other. In fact at various stages

[18]For further discussion of the languages used in the film and of political elements, see David Hanan, 'The Indonesian Teen Movie *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*: A Product of the Post-Suharto *Reformasi* Period', provided as part of a study guide to the film in pdf form, in the DVD release of *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* by Between Three Worlds DVD, Monash Asia Institute, 2006.

Fig. 6.7 The 'girl gang' expresses its group solidarity as Cinta recites her poem 'I want to be together forever', in a scene early in the film *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* ('What's Up with Love?', Miles Productions, 2002) (Courtesy of Miles Productions)

in this scene all the young women are physically linked to another in some way, not only by the joining of their hands but by the close positioning—including physical contact—of their torsos and limbs (Fig. 6.7).[19]

While this scene in *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* expressing the group solidarity of a girl gang is almost unique in the context of world cinema (I have not been able to find the body language displayed in this scene in American teen movies), body language of this kind is commonly found in the numerous wall reliefs in the galleries at the different levels of the ninth-century Borobudur temple in Central Java. There are at least five characteristics found both in this scene from *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* and in many of these wall reliefs at Borobudur. First, in many of the wall reliefs

[19] Cinta informs the others that her poem is entitled 'I want to be together forever' and its words are as follows: 'When this bud grows, like a body taking root, each breath taken is a word. Imaginings, sounds, emotions mingle together, weaving one robe around us. Our hands join, our lips form in unison. Every word we say is the command of the high priestess. The rest is sand. Only the sand blows, then swirls and disappears … But we still dance: a dance that only we know … Our souls are like a palanquin. So just take a seat and we will take all—because we are one' (my translation).

the main sitting posture is *duduk bersila*, whether of central protagonists (the Buddha, the Mother of the Buddha, a king, gods or a *bodhisattva*) or of their attendants, servants, Brahmins, priests, Buddhist nuns, visiting dignitaries, warriors, merchants and so on. Second, as in the film, these figures at Borobudur predominantly face the viewer, sitting closely together in a row, rather than opposite one another, although those in dramatic interaction with others may face in a slightly different direction. Third, in the images at the Borobudur *stupa*, often the lesser characters (attendants, priests, devotees, warriors, visiting dignitaries sitting apart from the Buddha) are organized as a group. If so, they sit in very close proximity to one another, appearing as one self-orchestrated mass. Fourth, usually if there are groups they are often made up of all-female or all-male groups. Fifth, members of these groups sit so closely to one another that they often appear to have bodily contact with one another, with limbs touching one another, in a way that is largely unacceptable in, for example, contemporary Western society. Indeed, one can locate in the Borobudur reliefs similar intertwining or intermeshing of limbs to that which one finds in this scene in the film. This is a feature of many group compositions in the wall reliefs at Borobudur, but one very clear example is in the positioning of nymphs in the wall relief known as the 'Encounter with Sixteen Nymphs' (Fig. 6.8).[20]

The suggestion that body language seen today in Indonesia, particularly dance forms, can be observed depicted in wall reliefs at the ninth-century Borobudur temple has been made by other scholars. Using photos of both wall reliefs and contemporary popular dances, Claire Holt suggested that prototypes of dances still performed in Central Java in the 1930s were to be found in wall reliefs carved at Borobudur.[21] Holt surmised that—even at the time of the construction of Borobudur—types of dances shown in wall reliefs depicting court and village life may already have been 'traditional'. Fundamentally one can find in these wall reliefs at least two kinds of dance: first there are restrained and graceful

[20]For the context of this image in Buddhist legend and mythology, and photographs of related wall reliefs at Borobudur, see the website Photo Dharma, 'Buddhist Art in Java, Maitrakanyaka's Story', especially panel 110, http://www.photodharma.net/Indonesia/06-Divyavadana-Level-1/06-Divyavadana-Level-1-Maitrakanyakas-Storyboard.htm, accessed 26 May 2016.

[21]Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1967, 109–22.

Fig. 6.8 Detail from the wall relief 'Encounter with Sixteen Nymphs' from the section identified as 'Maitrakanyaka's Story', located on the East Wall, Level One of the ninth-century Buddhist temple, Candi Borobudur, Central Java (Courtesy of Anandajoti Bhikkhu of Photo Dharma). In the original wall relief 11 of the 16 nymphs are shown. The full image supplied by Photo Dharma has been cropped to emphasize aspects of the wall relief relevant to the argument in this book.

court dances, similar to the *bedhaya* and *serimpi* still found in courts in Central Java today; second, there are the more dramatic dances found in peasant populations, particularly as performed by men. Examples of less restrained dancing by females found in images at Borobudur, according to Holt, were also still reflected in the 1930s in Central Java in village social dances such as the *tayuban*, *ronggeng* and *joget*. Other pertinent examples included dances by dancing drummers; military dances; a *tayuban* dance party involving both men and women but where the dancing by women is more restrained; solo female court dancers accompanied by two men; and paired female dancers, as found today in the Balinese *legong*. Holt qualifies her argument in minor ways, admitting that the pacing of some dances cannot be ascertained from the wall reliefs, and suggesting that, overall, dances in the 1930s seemed a little more restrained, possibly due to the Muslim influence in Java.

Some have raised methodological questions about whether we can use images from temples such as Borobudur and Prambanan to support

arguments about what Java was like in the ninth and tenth centuries—as Claire Holt does. Felicia Hughes-Freeland, for example, affirms that it is important to be aware that much imagery, especially sacred imagery, is formed out of abstractions that eschew realism.[22] Indeed, one may add that at Borobudur much of the imagery and statuary of the Buddha himself are modelled on images of the Buddha from Sarnath in India during the Gupta period. But what is at issue here is not images of the Buddha, but the proxemics of the numerous groups of figures in the wall reliefs. Moreover, it is not only Claire Holt who has used still surviving or even modern phenomenon to speculate on what Java was like a thousand years ago, but also Jan Fontein and Alessandra Iyer.[23] We should note that the body language of closely compacted, seated and even standing groups in the Borobudur wall reliefs is quite different from the body language in other comparable temple complexes, such as the twelfth-century Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia, or even in the much older Buddhist cave monument at Ajanta in India, which is regarded by Fontein as perhaps one of the few possible precedents for Borobudur. Nevertheless, considerations such as those put here regarding heritages of body language can never be conclusive, and the arguments I have developed above are intended to stimulate debate and interest in this topic rather than to affirm a certainty.

In response to my question about how deliberate the depiction of body language in *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* was, the co-producer and co-writer of the film, Riri Riza, replied to my email thus:

> We were very aware that, for example, the Indonesian female high school students have a tradition of forming a chick gang—and all generations seem to have had it from the '70s to the present. We researched this just by exchanging stories, and especially used the girls in the films as our source of ideas for scenes. They had their own way of using 'High Five' and secret meetings. 'High Five' is when two or more characters agree to something and they put their hands together. I should say that this 'gank culture' [gang culture] is very universal amongst all generations of high school students in

[22] Felicia Hughes-Freeland, '*Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance in Java: A Study in Dance*' (review of book by Alessandra Iyer), in *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 16 (2), 1998, 77–80.

[23] Jan Fontein, 'Sculpture, Text and Tradition at Borobudur: A Reconsideration', in Marijke J. Klokke, ed., *Narrative Sculpture and Literary Traditions in South and Southeast Asia*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, 1–18; Alessandra Iyer, *Sculpture and Dance in Ancient Java: A Study in Dance Iconography*, Bangkok, White Lotus Press, 1998.

> Indonesia, and the film became very popular because of this, even for adults, many of whom found the film very affecting, arousing nostalgia for their own teen years.[24]

The implication here is that the particular arrangement of bodies in the shots that I have analysed was arrived at largely by the girls themselves playing the scene. In the closeness and proximity of the intertwining of limbs, in most contexts one might expect a sexual component, but this body language is not an invitation to sexuality. It displays the relaxed way in which physical contact can be meaningful for Indonesian teenagers, without having immediate sexual repercussions. The attempt to depict the intense bonding and the different sensory world that is part of daily experience for groups of teenage Indonesian girls was part of the project of the film, and one of the reasons why the film was such a success in Indonesia.

The plot of *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* subsequently develops in a way in which the young woman, Cinta, experiences a conflict of loyalties between her growing if ambivalent interest in the young man, Rangga, and her loyalty to the girl gang in which she plays a formative and leadership role. The film is therefore partly about that phase in adolescent life in which, as noted above, a teenager may move from absorption in an identity involving bonding with a same-sex group, to a state of mind in which primary importance is accorded to a relationship with an individual of the opposite sex. In the view of the author, the film opens with this representation of absorption and bonding within the group, represented literally as a form of teenage behaviour, and symbolically as a psychological state of being, because this is a form of behaviour that Cinta, growing into adulthood, will eventually leave behind. In the movie Cinta's love interest, Rangga, who is something of a loner and is not closely connected to any group of male teenagers, comments sarcastically at one point on Cinta's exceptionally close connection with her girl gang. Nevertheless, as an Indonesian teen movie, the film affirms both the meaningfulness of achieving a close, personal, more adult relationship with an individual, and, given the care taken in staging this opening scene, it also affirms the importance of the earlier state of absorption within a same-sex group.

Apart from the parallels with images at Borobudur, there is also the question of whether we can find examples of close same-sex bonding

[24] Riri Riza, personal communication, 28 November 2005.

between groups of protagonists in other movies about contemporary life in South East Asia. One example is a Thai teen movie made ten years earlier than *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* The film is *Kling Wai Kon Phor Son Wai* ('When in Trouble, Get Away Fast: That's What Dad Teaches Us', Somjing Srisuphab, 1991). To some extent this Thai movie deals with similar themes of adolescent group identity, but in a Thai context, and this time with a group of boys. Like *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*, this film was also spectacularly successful within the marketplace, and its success ensured that teen movies would become the dominant genre of Thai cinema in the 1990s.[25] It also contains a scene of same-sex bodily contact.

In this Thai film, the key characters (who call themselves 'the rolling stones') are a group of males aged about 15 years. Here the most striking representation of group identity is found not early in the film, but very late in the film. In one of the valedictory scenes the teenagers are conscious that their school days and their lives together are coming to an end. The male students squat on the ground in a line on a sports ground, and with affection write messages to each other on the back of the shirt of the person in front of them. The camera tracks laterally left along this line of physical contact, observing this ritual of farewell as also a ritual celebrating closeness and bonding, even as they part. We may note that this instance of group body language in the Thai film is more indirectly expressed and less clearly emphasized than it is in *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* Unlike in the latter film, this scene of body contact does not occur at the opening of the film but towards the end, and in a context motivated by the valedictory moment of separation—from here on these students, who are all leaving school, will not be together but are expected to become individuals, and some are developing romantic attachments with girls. The differences in representation are almost certainly related to the fact that the bonding is between males rather than between females, where bodily contact and physical affection tends to be more accepted. Nevertheless, the body language in this scene in the Thai film is not found in American teen movies. For example the staging of the valedictory scene at the end of Linklater's 1993 'coming-of-age' teen movie, *Dazed and Confused*, where individuated male teenagers, some of them embracing their girlfriends,

[25] Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'Thai Cinema Since 1970', in David Hanan, ed., *Film in South East Asia: Views from the Region*, Hanoi, SEAPAVAA and Vietnam Film Institute, 2001, 155.

lie on the sports ground some distance apart and reminisce about their school days, is substantially different from that in *Kling Wai Kon Phor Son Wai* in terms of gender relations and of relation of individual to group.[26]

Framing and Composition of the Group and the Individual in Shot/Reverse-Shots in *Roro Mendut*

A film made in the early 1980s handles this specifically Indonesian transition from youthful same-sex group to a heterosexual encounter, in a sharply etched and—as the director has admitted—a quite deliberately iconographic way, and one that I would argue is culturally specific. The film is *Roro Mendut*, which was discussed in Chap. 1 to foreshadow issues of cultural specificity, including body language, and cultural and political resistance. I will not repeat the quite detailed description of the film given there, except to say that it depicts the resistance of a young woman dancer, Roro Mendut, to her sexual subjugation by a seventeenth-century Mataram Empire general who captured her when he conquered the northern coastal region of Java, where she was born; and that the early court scenes of the film are quite distinctive in their representation, via the cinemascope screen, of various massed same-sex groups, whether they be lowly courtiers or groups of aristocratic women, images not unlike those we find in Borobudur, here consciously arranged.

About halfway through the film, the heroine, Roro Mendut, meets a handsome young man, Pronocitro, who is visiting the Mataram region. As the couple become enamoured with each other, Pronocitro then undertakes to help Roro Mendut escape from the court. The scene to be discussed is the one where the couple become aware of each other for the first time. Roro Mendut has spent the day selling saliva-moistened cigarettes from her tent in a village market place, in order to pay the tax imposed on her by the general. The moment of transition from absorption within a group to individual pairing is pictured graphically in a series of shots, as the couple sees each other for the first time, at the end of the day, as villag-

[26]For a lengthier discussion of Indonesian and Thai teen movies, including discussions of genre variations in different political eras, see David Hanan, 'Changing Social Formations in Indonesian and Thai Teen Movies', in Ariel Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-authoritarian Politics*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008, 54–69.

ers and courtiers return to their homes. In a Hollywood film either one or both of these characters would on average be established as, in some sense, alone. In this film, the young woman, Roro Mendut, is accompanied by a maidservant from the court, while the young warrior, Pronocitro, is accompanied by two male servants travelling with him, who are played in the film by actors performing rather like clown figures in traditional Javanese *ketoprak* popular theatre. Earlier Roro Mendut had asked her servant to find out the name of the young man.

In the exchange of gazes between Roro Mendut and Pronocitro, filmed in cinemascope, their accompanying servants are also in all the initial shots. In the first shot that I provide from the sequence to illustrate this group exchange of looks (Fig. 6.9), Pronocitro and his two servants look for Roro Mendut, but in the wrong direction—Pronocitro, at the rear of the gazing group, grasping the shoulder of his nearest servant, as all of them look right. In the second example (Fig. 6.10), Roro Mendut, having called out Pronocitro's name, remains half hidden behind her maidservant, as though shyly hiding, at the same time holding her maidservant in front of her, by placing her hands around her waist. In the third image provided (Fig. 6.11), one of a series of similar shots, Pronocitro, still grouped with his two servants, having turned now to the left, catches sight of Roro Mendut. In this shot, one of his servants grasps Pronocitro's shoulder, as all three now gaze in the direction of Roro Mendut. In the

Fig. 6.9 Shot/reverse-shot sequence from Ami Priyono's *Roro Mendut* (1982), in which Roro Mendut and Pronocitro encounter one another for the first time. In this early shot Pronocitro and his servants look for Roro Mendut, but in the wrong direction (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 6.10 Subsequent shot in which Roro Mendut, having called out Pronocitro's name, remains behind her maidservant (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

Fig. 6.11 Pronocitro, with two servants, having turned in the other direction, now catches sight of Roro Mendut, a servant drumming excitedly on Pronocitro's shoulders (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

fourth shot, which occurs after Mendut's servant has given Pronocitro—filmed alone, his face in extreme close-up—one of the *kretek* cigarettes, Roro Mendut is framed by her servant, who, now standing behind Roro Mendut, holds both of Roro Mendut's shoulders, as though presenting her to Pronocitro (Fig. 6.12). The fact that in both sides of the shot/reverse-shot construction we have the central protagonists accompanied by servant-companions creates a visual symmetry that emphasizes all the more the group context in which each is located, and from which each

Fig. 6.12 Roro Mendut gazes back at Pronocitro, framed by her maidservant behind her, who holds her by her shoulders (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

will emerge. So it is from within a framework of the habitual group body language of a touch-culture that the two lovers begin to approach one another and to exchange gazes. While much of the subsequent action of the film is taken up with the exploits of the newly formed romantic couple—Roro Mendut and Pronocitro—attempting to escape from the court and the general's power, this first encounter between them can be linked back to the sense, established at the beginning of the film, that this is a group society in which one is rarely alone. On the wall reliefs of the Borobudur temple one can quite frequently find examples of central protagonists accompanied by a servant, with whom there is some physical contact.

I had the opportunity to discuss this particular scene from *Roro Mendut* with its director, Ami Priyono (1939–2001), at the SEAPAVAA (South East Asia-Pacific Audio Visual Archive Association) Conference held in Jakarta at the National Library of Indonesia, in March 1997, at which conference the gregarious Ami was master of ceremonies. Ami, who had been trained in film design at the State Film School in Moscow, and had frequented intellectual circles all his life—his father had been a Minister of Education in the Sukarno government, and his wife, Julia Suryakusuma, a leading feminist writer—confirmed my analysis of this scene, saying he was delighted that his intentions behind the scene, and the film as a whole's relevance to group life in Indonesia, were understood.

Conclusion, and a Caveat: Nya Abbas Akup's *Matt Dower*

In the previous chapter I showed how the most innovative Indonesian avant-garde film artists made films that reveal a preoccupation with groups and group interaction, in contrast to European and American avant-garde filmmakers, especially Luis Buñuel and Maya Deren, whose early surrealist and short independent films explore the individual psyche and the self. In this subsequent chapter, working initially from the film *November 1828* and the nineteenth-century painting, *Diponegoro Captured at Magelang*, I have attempted to develop a more complex set of terms to account for the interrelated phenomena that is group body language. Most important are the concepts of 'non-institutionalized group identity', where one has spontaneous group formation, so that groups do not need to be formed via bureaucratic means through institutions, but arise out of the inherent group-forming tendencies of the people. Second, was the contrast I set up between the individual psychological depth of the main Dutch figures in Raden Saleh's painting, and the communal psychological depth in the figures of the Javanese, a distinction that holds good if one analyses the main Dutch-influenced Indo character in *November 1828*, Captain de Borst, and compares him with the Javanese villagers in the film. I suggested, in turn, that the strength of this group bonding was something that evolved in early childhood and teenage years, examining the intense bonding that can occur in adolescence through an analysis of a scene in the teen movie, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* This film, which uses as its starting point the bonding one finds in a Jakarta teenage 'girl gang', struck a chord not only among Indonesian teenagers but also among Indonesian adults, who were reminded of this special period in their lives, to which the film enabled them to return. But *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* is also a movie about a young woman finding she is attracted to a teenage male acquaintance, and the film charts her ambivalence as she moves out of the almost exclusive, intense bonding of her teenage years into an incipient adult relationship of two individuals. I then illustrated how an earlier film, *Roro Mendut*, in the way the director composed the shot/reverse shots depicting the first encounter between Mendut and Pronocitro, showed them as emerging from groups, a visual trope consciously used by the director of the film to exemplify the cultural specificity of Indonesian interaction. Indeed, almost all the examples I have used in these two chapters are from films where the directors are very conscious of—and deliberate in—what they do. The argument has been augmented with a comparative

analysis of similar kinds of group body language in a wall relief from the ninth-century Central Javanese Buddhist *stupa*, Borobudur.

Others have remarked on the group orientation of Indonesian societies, whether Bateson and Mead in the 1930s or, more recently, Karl Heider. However, Bateson and Mead do not examine feature films, and Heider presents his argument primarily through the analysis of the stories in the films. In this and the previous chapter I have mostly conducted my analysis through visual means, exploring both the varied and complex ways these phenomena can be discerned, and the conscious ways in which the best Indonesian directors have attempted to give sustained visual expression to this significant and—in the numerous forms it takes—relatively unique and creative aspect of Indonesian society and culture, however much it is taken for granted by those who live it.

Concepts such as *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) and *mufakat* (group deliberation arriving at consensus), discussed in other parts of the book, would appear to arise out of the resilient sense of community that is part of the ethos of these societies, but they are not always deployed wisely. In these concluding remarks I therefore wish to give one example of a film that draws attention to the limitations of certain kinds of group behaviour: the potentiality for conformity, the lack of individual moral choice and the lack of a capacity for independent, individually based thought.

A film that critiques group behaviour is *Matt Dower*, a picaresque fantasy made in 1969, early in the Suharto New Order period. *Matt Dower* is set in an imaginary Javanese court of the seventeenth century, in which the real leader, Sambar Geledek (Lightning Flash), has been deposed and forced to flee, and is being hunted down, while a usurper now holds power. This film is an allegory of the power struggle initiated by General Suharto against the charismatic President Sukarno, and I have discussed both its allegorical dimensions and its political context elsewhere.[27] In quite lengthy, pointedly satiric scenes the film observes the group body language and conformity of the court advisors and civil servants. Both courtiers, including aristocratic dignitaries, and servants take part in elaborately orchestrated court rituals, usually culminating in statements of policy by the new, usurping leader—respectfully addressed by his supporters throughout the film as 'Munafik'

[27] David Hanan, 'A Tradition of Political Allegory and Political Satire in Indonesian Cinema', in Yvonne Michalik and Laura Coppens, eds, *Asian Hot Shots: Indonesian Cinema*, Marburg, Schüren Verlag GmbH, 14–45.

(Hypocrite)—who has taken over power from the rightful leader, and who is conducting a purge of supporters of the former leader. These statements of policy echo ideologies both of Sukarno in his later Guided Democracy period in the early to mid 1960s, and newly adopted policies and national ideologies being purveyed by Suharto and his circle of advisors in the late 1960s, both of which can be seen as perversions of the long standing *Pancasila* national philosophy. Both in these scenes, and in smaller-scale court scenes where the Munafik confers with his retinue of courtiers, half a dozen attendants (serving as both advisors and lowly servants) are lined up in rows and move sinuously around the court spaces, the fluidity of their movements, and the 'camp' statements of most of them, reflecting their ever-willing compliance, as a group, with the wishes of the leader, who acts as a magnet controlling their movements.

Early in the film the courtiers chant a song that they all know because it is an affirmation of the court ideology:

Semua untuk semua.	Everyone for everyone.
Itu yang kira kira …	It is that, I guess …
Semua untuk semua	Everyone for everyone
Semua untuk semua …	Everyone for everyone …
Itu yang kira kira	It is that, which I guess,
Lebih baik dari pada	Is better than
Semua untuk saya	Everyone for me …
Saya untuk semua.	I for everyone.
Semua untuk semua	Everyone for everyone
Itu yang kira kira	It is that, which I guess,
Lebih baik dari pada	Is better than
Semua untuk saya	Everyone for me.

(my translation)

Here we have a simplistic statement of the concept of *gotong royong* (mutual support), a concept enshrining the group-oriented and mutually supportive nature of Indonesian society, espoused by Sukarno, in the conclusion of his speech introducing his proposed state philosophy, *Pancasila*, in 1945. But it is now presented as a song based on a series of slogans, sung in a hypocritical court made up of sycophantic courtiers, governing a society we have already seen to be made up of poor, exploited and often displaced and persecuted citizens. Just prior to the song the naïve hero, Matt Dower, recognizing that he needs to fill the role of the former

leader, makes a speech, which begins in the following way (echoing Julius Caesar's '*Veni*, *vidi*, *vici*'):

> I come, I see, I am surprised … Surprised that at this time there are still boot-lickers who struggle to be individuals … individuals.[28]

At one point—in a ritual that tests the unconditional loyalty of his courtiers—the Munafik (in fact Suharto) lines his courtiers up, organizing them in a row to jointly chant the mantra 'Smash Sambar Geledek' while they join him in giving a fascist salute. This ritual culminates with the Munafik throwing a rock at the large portrait of the former leader, Sambar Geledek (Sukarno), still enshrined, like many other portraits of the former leader, on the wall of a chamber of the palace.

In another scene, the same group of servants dance in a circle around the room, chanting, while formulating policy 'by consensus', a scene which echoes the governing of the country by a *musyawarah* (mutual consultation) by a *gotong royong* cabinet comprising party representatives chosen by the president, a fundamental feature of government in Sukarno's Guided Democracy period. A provocative element in the film is the implication that traditional forms of group consultation (such as *mufakat* and *musyawarah*), which in the village were intended to produce true democracy, have been taken over, their true structural form and *raison d'être* now perverted so they have been hollowed out to become shells used by bureaucrats and politicians solely for their own advantage. Julia Suryakusuma has succinctly outlined the core philosophy of the New Order state, as 'integralistic-organic', wherein state and society are seen as constituting an organic whole. She sees this as partly based on Javanese aristocratic ideas of the unity of the people (*kawula*) and lord (*gusti*), mystical in conception, implying the union of inner and outer worlds, the implication being that 'no conflict between individual and whole can be countenanced'.[29]

[28] The lines in the film are: '*Saya datang, saya lihat, saya heran … Heran di waktu ini masih ada penjilat-penjilat kaki yang berkutut individu … individu.*'

[29] See Julia Suryakusuma, 'The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia', in Laurie J. Sears, ed., *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, 93. The origins and history of concepts of an integralist-organic or corporatist family state, and their adoption by the New Order, have been traced in detail, including the influence of Hegel rather than simply Javanese traditions, by David Bourchier in *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Idea of the Family State*, London and New York, Routledge, 2014, Chapter 1.

While the parody of consensus references the political styles of both Sukarno and Suharto, a speech made early on in the film by the Munafik might be seen to refer to the attempts by Suharto to depoliticize the population. Here is the speech in which the Munafik announces a new policy, that henceforth the people will not drink water, but *arak* (an alcoholic beverage made of palm spirits and containing up to 50 % alcohol), while his courtiers unfurl banners with slogans designed to promote the policy. At this point he is questioned by the ruling Lord for whom he is the Prime Minister:

His Lordship: To tell the people to drink arak – now that makes sense! But a ban on drinking water? That is hardly imaginable!

Munafik: But these days, what is imaginable? I know of course there will be a reaction. But not for long! Afterwards the people will become accustomed to it. Eventually the people will forget. Arak will become the daily drink, and water will be forgotten … People from other countries will swarm here with the task of learning from your lordship how to run a country.

(my translation)

This policy of dumbing down the people at the same time as telling them they are getting what they need prefigures the concept of the floating mass, a key concept within the New Order, articulated by Suharto advisor and later Minister of Information, Ali Moertopo, and promulgated in a law in 1973, whereby political participation at the village level except at the time of elections was outlawed, because the masses of the people were not sophisticated enough to be involved in politics and should get on with the business of development. Bourchier and Hadiz comment on the floating mass concept: 'In contrast to Sukarno's efforts to mobilize the masses, the emphasis here is on winding back popular participation in politics for the sake of political stability and development'.[30]

[30] David Bourchier and Vedi Hadiz, eds, *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 29. See also the excerpts from Moertopo's writings, ibid., 45–9.

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CHAPTER 7

Women in a Context of Cultural Difference

> To speak of 'Indonesian women' is an impossibility; instead we have sought out representations of 'the feminine' in the historical, ethnographic, literary and *mediatique* stories that circulate in Indonesia today, hoping that these stories may provide further sites of resistance.
>
> Laurie J. Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 4.

Introduction

In this chapter I explore films in which women are central characters and where these women characters are shown to have strength and determination and are engaged in what for them is a decisive struggle. The films have been chosen because at least three of them have not been discussed very much at all, and they all raise numerous issues pertaining both to cultural specificity and related cultural differences, and to film theory, particularly feminist film theory. Nevertheless, the films discussed in this chapter should not be regarded as representative of Indonesian films about women, nor should they be taken automatically as representing the condition of women in Indonesia, generally. Rather, each one should be taken as a special case, for the theoretical and cultural issues it raises and the further thought and contemplation that this can stimulate. One reason for writing about them is that the critique of negative images of women is not the only way one can engage in questions of the representation of human potentiality and of women. The discussion of these films is preceded by an outline of relevant aspects of feminist film theory, and by surveys of

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writings about women in Indonesia, and about the representation of women in Indonesian cinema. The three main films to be discussed are *Suci Sang Primadona* ('Suci the Prima Donna', 1977), a film which dramatizes a music hall singer's relationships with three men older than her; *Sangkuriang* (1982), an example of popular cinema retelling an old legend from West Java; and *Nji Ronggeng* ('The *Ronggeng* Dancer', 1969), a film about a *ronggeng* dancer in West Java, who performs an interactive social dance with men who pay to dance with her. A fourth film, *Dibalik Kelambu* ('Behind the Mosquito Net', 1982), a drama about problems faced by a young couple living with a parent-in-law, is also explored in order to show how even insightful anthropological generalizations about cultural formations encounter difficulties when seen in the context of individual psychological differences, varying social conditions and change over time.

The issue of the position of women is a more complex set of questions than that of identifiable differences in body language—as discussed in the previous chapter—or of related phenomena, such as institutions, for example the Balinese *banjar* (local community unit, with administrative powers) that fosters, facilitates and provides an institutional framework for an existing spirit of community, and hence of group identity and group solidarity. Even while these commonly found features of Indonesian society themselves impact on women, and provide frameworks in which women can participate or be marginalized, such institutions are only one of numerous factors impacting on women, which include also social pressures, gender role assignments and networks of power. However, in moving in this chapter to outline the arguments regarding the various positioning(s) of women in Indonesian cinema and in Indonesian society, I will not entirely leave behind or abandon the issue of body language and of group identity and of the place of the individual within this, and the related issue of group dynamics. In this sense I will be looking at the position of women in the context of broad kinds of cultural specificity found generally in Indonesia. Towards the end of the chapter there will be a discussion of a European film, Ingmar Bergman's *Sawdust and Tinsel* (1953), because an analysis of aspects of this film can lead to reflections on how group coherence and identity are maintained, and how power can operate within a group context, even though this film was made in a culture and a society very different from Indonesia.

Indeed other notions of cultural specificity and cultural differences, besides group identity, will be brought in to play in this chapter at various

stages. One is the claim by some women anthropologists that Indonesian women, at least in villages in Muslim Java, have traditionally had financial power, in the sense that the power of the purse is accorded to them, on the grounds that they are better financial managers than men.[1] These accounts in turn find an echo in the broad claims made by historian Anthony Reid, based on reports by travellers to the region in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that at some periods in history some women in South East Asian society have enjoyed status and financial power not enjoyed by women in other quarters of the globe at the time.[2] Reid (and others, notably Barbara Watson Andaya) qualifies this account, reminding us that the status position of women and their financial power changed in South East Asia with the consolidation of patriarchal religions, whether it be Christianity or Islam or Buddhism, and with the coming of colonial regimes with their Western influences. Clearly there are in Indonesia strongly patriarchal societies and communities, where the position of women has been determined by religion and other related traditions, for example in the Batak Region of North Sumatra, and perhaps in Hindu Bali.[3]

Any discussion of women in the context of cultural difference can never be comprehensive or complete, but only in fact very partial. Much has already been written on the position of women in various regions of Indonesian society, particularly by feminist anthropologists. Since the early 1980s material has appeared also on the representation of women in Indonesian cinema, notably by Krishna Sen. Sen's critical and interroga-

[1] See Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*, New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1961, 46 and 122–8; Suzanne A. Brenner, 'Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideologies of Gender and Self-control', in Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz, eds, *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, 19–50.

[2] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, vol. I, *The Lands below the Winds*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988, 156–8; Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2006, 229–30.

[3] See Veronica H. Long and Sarah L. Kindon, 'Gender and Tourism Development in a Balinese Village', in M. Thea Sinclair, ed., *Gender, Work and Tourism*, London, Routledge, 1997, 91–119. Long and Kindon claim that even while, according to Balinese Hinduism and *adat*, women and men should have equal rights and obligations, in fact in Bali men are regarded as the head, public representative and decision-maker in families, and 'women do not usually inherit land upon marriage or parental death (although this is changing with increasing education and urbanization), women have no rights to their children or marriage property if they divorce, and women are not allowed to be polygamous' (96).

tory work on cinema in the New Order period has been followed by or has prompted the work of other writers. This in turn has led to a greater awareness of the issue not only on the part of scholars and teachers, but even by Indonesian filmmakers themselves, particularly newly emerging women filmmakers in the post-Suharto *Reformasi* period.[4] The approach taken in this chapter will not be simply to reiterate in new examples the insights of Sen and others, who have critiqued the retrograde and regressive positioning of women both in Indonesian society and in much of Indonesian cinema during the Suharto New Order period. In fact the kinds of theory and scholarship brought to bear in this chapter will of necessity be a combination of anthropology, and theory in anthropology, as well as feminist film theory.

Some of the concerns of this chapter can be quickly illustrated by an examination of Fig. 7.1, a production still from a scene early in Garin Nugroho's award-winning musical film, *Opera Jawa* (2006). In this image of a group of Javanese peasant women dancing and singing, we see a number of characteristics of Javanese women celebrated by the singer-dancers and highlighted by the film. Significantly, there is the strong suggestion of group or shared identity, with all six women in the original image linked in various ways: by the coordinated group movements of the dance; by the colourful, variegated *batik* costumes they all wear; by the graciously linked arms of the women, particularly those in the front row; and by their shared facial expressions, and by the implication of shared labour. (Incidentally the song they sing includes the lines: 'Whipping the oxen will only bring the cart to a halt. An oxen cannot be hurried'.) The baskets the women carry on their backs or shoulders are baskets traditionally used in the gathering of rice in the harvest, for which women—in the customary division of labour in most villages in both Java and Bali—are responsible; the baskets are also used for transporting goods to market. These large baskets are held on the women's backs by slings (*selendang*), but the slings are also the means by which their infants and young children are carried in bodily contact with their mothers for much of their early lives. In this production still, the women—particularly the woman front left—appear to be courteously, smilingly, inviting the spectator into their world, at the

[4]For discussions of films by—and interviews with—Indonesian women filmmakers in the post-Suharto era, see Yvonne Michalik, ed., *Indonesian Women Filmmakers*, Berlin, Regiospectra, 2013.

Fig. 7.1 A group of Central Javanese peasant women dancing and singing, in a scene from early in Garin Nugroho's 2006 musical film, *Opera Jawa* (Courtesy of Garin Nugroho)

same time proudly and yet humorously affirming their dignity, their unity and their cohesion. Apart from being culturally specific, this production still, in itself, is a strong visual message, a striking image testifying to feminine power, beauty and connection.

Film Theory and the Visual Representation of Women

In the 1970s Film Studies began to develop quite rich and productive concepts and frameworks for discussions of the positioning of women within film texts. What was distinctive at this time was the project of film theory not simply to give critical readings or interpretations of meaning in films, but to explore the specificities of cinema, in particular the way in which the properties of film per se, as a moving image projected most frequently in a darkened environment, together with characteristic formal procedures (dominant codes for the construction of point of view, linking

the look of the camera to a character look) not available, for example in theatre, resulted in certain characteristic kinds of positioning of women within a film text.

Most influential among these analyses was Laura Mulvey's pioneering article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', an unusually succinct and original account of the positioning of the woman both as the object of the gaze of the central male character and of the camera, presented frequently as an erotic object, and hence objectified, but also subject to investigatory processes in the course of the film's narrative.[5] As a theoretical basis for her argument Mulvey used both Freudian concepts (voyeuristic scopophilia, ego ideal/ideal ego, castration) and Lacanian concepts (the mirror phase), arguing that elements of these were mobilized in the film viewing experience. To illustrate her structural paradigm in terms of concrete examples, Mulvey chose pertinent examples from films by Hitchcock and von Sternberg. Mulvey argued that in mainstream Hollywood cinema, not only is the woman the object of a voyeuristic camera look, and the look of a main male character, but within the narrative of the film she is judged and in a sense controlled by an investigative look, which is in turn often aligned with the main male character. In her discussion of Hitchcock, Mulvey writes:

> Hitchcock has never concealed his interest in voyeurism, cinematic and non-cinematic. His heroes are exemplary of the symbolic order and the law—a policeman (*Vertigo*), a dominant male possessing money and power (*Marnie*)—the man is on the right side of the law, the woman on the wrong. Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position …[6]

In *Vertigo* the detective, Scottie, obsessed with an attractive woman whom he was investigating and whose death he was unable to prevent, attempts to reconstruct her image using a woman he meets who strangely appears to be the living image of the dead woman, and so tries to control her.[7]

[5] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16 (3), 1975, 6–18.

[6] Ibid., 15.

[7] If one considers this latter part of the film, one might surmise—although Mulvey herself does not make this point—that Scottie's actions in controlling her image are almost the same as those of a film director attempting to create a particular image of his actress for the film he is making.

While *Vertigo* is certainly a pertinent example, Mulvey has since qualified her argument, writing in 2009 that while her original 1975 essay argued that Hollywood 'produced a film aesthetic that was essentially ordered by a regime of desire that translated into a gendered voyeurism', much of this early film theory, such as her own, was political and polemical rather than fully scholarly in nature, and was limited by access to films. Here Mulvey affirms that more recent investigations of film history have shown that 'the erotics of the cinematic look are not uniform across the history of Hollywood cinema', and that, in particular, earlier Hollywood in the silent era of the 1920s did much to introduce new conceptions of womanhood to international audiences.[8]

In this chapter I begin with Mulvey, but show that some Indonesian films have scenes in which the gaze is reversed or challenged, and so intervene in the power structure implicit in Mulvey's analysis, and that this is related to other phenomena in Indonesian society, for example long-standing dance traditions, and so has anthropological implications. Additionally, I wish to shift the discussion somewhat, particularly with regard to the issue of 'control'. For example, it is often said that the importance of the gaze in cinema was that it was an objectifying, even 'controlling' gaze. The origin of this terminology arises from Mulvey's use of Freud. Introducing Freud's use of the term 'scopophilia', Mulvey wrote of Freud that 'he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze'.[9] While Mulvey is usually credited with initiating the term 'male gaze', other uses of the term 'gaze', implying power, preceded her use. Lacan, for instance, as Kaja Silverman explains, used the term 'gaze' to refer not to the look, simply, of a person, but to the way in which, in the formation of our identity, we (both female and male) unconsciously internalize the looks of others as part of our identity, beginning with our parents, the mother's look linking us to ourselves via

[8] Laura Mulvey, 'Thoughts on the Young Modern Woman of the 1920s and Feminist Film Theory', in Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, second edition, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 213. Mulvey's 2009 essay pays tribute to the influence on her of Miriam Hansen's work on Hollywood in the 1920s. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Cinema*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1991.

[9] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 8–9. See also Laura Mulvey, 'British Feminist Film Theory's Spectators: Presence and Absence', *Camera Obscura* 20–21, 1989, 73.

the mirror.[10] Moreover, clearly, even if we speak metaphorically, there are controlling institutional gazes and forms of surveillance, both internalized and otherwise, and these have been discussed by Foucault, the most obvious example being in particular Jeremy Bentham's design for a prison, the 'Panopticon', which influenced not only some designs for prisons in nineteenth-century France, but a whole mentality of institutional surveillance.[11] But can we associate this notion of gaze, where subjects are actually controlled by the way they are monitored, with Mulvey's discussion of the way women are objectified in moving images created in film narratives? While the image of the woman was often controlled by the male director, the idea that gazes are a major form of actual control of women, whether in the cinema or otherwise, may be questioned. That women were objectified by a male gaze, and found that their identity was usurped by such images, is true and highly pertinent to an analysis of modern media. But in so far as the woman character might be controlled, it was not only by gazes (for women too are capable of gazing), but by certain discourses within the narrative, which, as Mulvey herself points out, were controlled by the meta-discourse of the film, and often were part of the point of view of the central male character.

This question of agency and control, implicit in Mulvey's terminology with regard to objectification, but potentially able to be used in a wider context, going beyond issues of representation to issues of social control, as in Foucault, will be addressed in new ways later in this chapter, not only in relation to female characters but in relation to groups and communities. However, in this chapter a number of alternative ways of thinking about the representation of men and women will be emphasized. Because

[10] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, New York, Routledge, 1994, 126–7 and passim. Silverman consistently distinguishes between 'the look' and 'the gaze', referring to what Mulvey refers to as 'the gaze' as 'the look' (or a look), and reserving the use of 'gaze' for the Lacanian sense of unconsciously seeing oneself in ways formed by others, by 'the subject-of-consciousness … as a seeing of itself seeing itself' (127).

[11] Of the Panopticon Foucault writes: 'The Panopticon is a mechanism for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen … It is an important mechanism for it automatizes and disindividualizes power.' See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage Books, 1995, 201–2. In his chapter on 'Panopticism', Foucault sees the Panopticon as a metaphor for modern 'disciplinary' societies and their pervasive inclination to observe and normalize.

this chapter is not concerned so much with cinematic specificity but with cultural specificity, it will not always give preference primarily to the visual. Rather, it will seek to locate other parameters of expressiveness, alongside the visual, whereby cultural specificity can be expressed. Moreover, because Indonesian society is, relatively speaking, a touch culture as well as group oriented, this chapter will at times examine ways in which eroticism may be expressed in ways different from those associated with visual pleasure.

In fact, critiques of 'ocularcentrism', the excessively visual orientation of Western society, or else provision—and theorization—of alternatives to the visual, have emerged over the last 20 years. This is found, for example, in David Michael Levin's *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, a collection of essays discussing both ocularcentrism, and the anti-ocularcentric movement in German and French thinking in the twentieth century; in Laura Marks' discussion of 'hapticity' (sensing objects via a sense of texture) in experimental video; and most recently in the realm of architecture, in Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, where the argument is put that architecture must pay attention to the other senses besides the eye, and the way in which the built environment should be a means of integrating the body as well as the eye.[12] Levin, echoing Heidegger, and, in effect, confirming Mulvey's concerns, argues that 'the will to power is very strong in vision', although his arguments extend beyond the 'male gaze' to refer to whole philosophical traditions.[13] Nevertheless, as Pallasmaa has pointed out, critiques of the hegemony of the visual have been made earlier on, by others, with deliberately paradoxical allusions to the mixing of the senses found in works by Goethe and

[12] David Michael Levin, ed., *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993; Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2000; Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, Chichester, Wiley and Sons, 2005.

[13] Levin writes: 'The will to power is very strong in vision. There is a very strong tendency in vision to grasp and fixate, to reify and totalize: a tendency to dominate, secure, and control, which eventually, because it was so extensively promoted, assumed a certain uncontested hegemony over our culture and its philosophical discourse, establishing, in keeping with the instrumental rationality of our culture, and the technological character of our society, an ocularcentric metaphysics of presence.' See Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision,* 212.

Nietzsche.[14] While Mulvey has critiqued visual pleasure and its operations in cinema, her alternatives were formal and political, the destruction of visual pleasure in dominant cinema by the positing of alternative cinematic forms and stratagems, rather than being concerned with cultural alternatives to the visual addressed by Levin and others.

Feminist Criticism of the Representation of Women in Indonesian Cinema

Krishna Sen, in her pioneering book, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, has outlined major problems in the representation of women in Indonesian film during the New Order period.[15] Some of Sen's critiques of the portrayal of women in Indonesian cinema echo those made by Mulvey and other Western feminists, for example *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur* ('Panting in the Mud', 1970) a film about prostitution which clearly traded off the spectacle of the female body, but at the same time condemned the prostitute's body as filthy. However, Sen also demonstrates that, in many films made during the New Order, there is an ideological emphasis on women being seen primarily as wives and mothers rather than as career women or being able to lead independent productive lives. In so far as strong women are depicted, the strong woman is almost always a mother exceptionally devoted to her family, as in Teguh Karya's *Ibunda* ('Mother', 1986). Moreover, argues Sen, this kind of woman is valued because she does not demand power or prestige in return. Additionally, with very few exceptions, gender is conceived in overdetermined binary terms, there are no alternative genders, no third sex.[16]

[14] Pallasmaa quotes the following statements: 'The hand wants to see, the eyes want to caress' (Goethe, *The Roman Elegies*, V) and 'The dancer has his ear in his toes' (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*). See Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 14.

[15] Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, 131–56.

[16] According to Ben Murtagh, it was only in 1988, with the release of *Istana Kecantikan* ('Palace of Beauty'), *Catatan Si Boy* ('Boy's Diary') and *Terang Bulan di Tengah Hari* ('Moonlight at Midday'), that openly gay Indonesian characters in Indonesian films attracted not unsympathetic Indonesian media attention. There were, however, films made in the 1970s depicting transgender characters. Murtagh argues that at least three of these films (two of them starring Benyamin S), although inevitably playing with stereotypes, used 'the power of the cinema to construct more complex characterizations', in accord with more sympathetic views of the *waria* (transsexual) community, advocated by the progressive Governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin. See Ben Murtagh, *Genders and Sexualities in Indonesian Cinema: Constructing Gay, Lesbi and Waria Identities on Screen*, New York, Routledge, 2013, 44–51, and passim.

As Sen shows, the period indeed is shocking in the number of psychologically corrective films that are made, where characters who step outside of what are regarded as normal gender roles are subject to some kind of correction in the course of the narrative. For example there is a family film, *Tangan Tangan Mungil* ('Little Hands', 1981), about behaviour therapy applied to a young girl who is regarded as too much of a tomboy. Another film, *Guruku Cantik Sekali* ('My Teacher is Very Pretty', 1979), written and directed by a woman director, is about how a schoolteacher who hates men comes to accept a man who loves her.

What Sen has argued about the depiction of women in New Order films, Julia Suryakusuma has found to be characteristic of intensified patriarchal ideology and institutional change during the New Order. Suryakusuma, in a study of wives' organizations, has argued that after 1965 state ideology strongly encouraged the domestication of women, so that women were exhorted to see themselves first as good wives and then good mothers, in that order of priority. This is reflected in the importance given to the 'Dharma Wanita', the organization for the wives of civil servants, where wives had status according to the rank of their husband in either the army or the civil service (Suryakusuma's term is 'State Ibuism', from '*ibu*', mother).[17] During the New Order period, women's organizations were in fact replaced by wives' organizations. This is in contrast to the Sukarno period, when feminist movements that had emerged during the revolutionary period had considerable influence, and resulted in the creation of a diverse range of radical women's organizations. Sen points out that in the New Order period women were placed at a disadvantage as the Indonesian economy was integrated into the global capitalist order, and that women were further disenfranchised by the destruction of the left-wing women's organizations that accompanied the purge of left-wingers in the society post-30 September 1965.[18] Others researching television programmes made during the New Order have confirmed Sen's insights regarding the domestication of women, but have also explored a number of exceptional cases, which provide hope for alternative perspectives, or even some indications

[17] Julia I. Suryakusuma, 'The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia', in Laurie J. Sears, ed., *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1996, 92–119.

[18] Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, 8–9.

of resistance by the subaltern.[19] The lawyer and academic Daniel Lev has affirmed that the effort to define women as essentially wives and mothers was indeed a New Order phenomena, as seen in official statements in the *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (Family Welfare Guidance document) and the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five Responsibilities of Women), but that there had been a substantial tradition of support for change in the position of women in the previous Sukarno era, and that ultimately this earlier trend may be prove to be the deeper current in the society.[20] Lev also drew attention to some progressive developments occurring even in the New Order period, through the relatively high levels of women participating in education, and argued there had been improvements in the legal position of women in Indonesia over many years, including some favourable reforms of divorce procedure in 1974.

Strong Women in South East Asia

If one takes a longer-term view, and examines the position of women in earlier times, it emerges that the reports of travellers journeying to South East Asia from China, Europe and elsewhere, as early as the fifteenth century, comment on the comparatively high status accorded to women in South East Asia. The historian Anthony Reid has cited numerous examples of early European visitors, and also visitors from China and India, commenting on the relative freedom and power of women in South East Asian countries. Reid, in an initial study in the 1980s, spent more than 25 pages succinctly documenting numerous instances he had found in his survey of surviving records from the period 1450–1680.[21] The aspects Reid raises in introducing his summary are the relatively high autonomy accorded to women and their economic importance. From 1600 onwards education became associated with religion and religious organizations, and it was

[19] See for example Saraswati Sunindyo, 'Gender Discourse on Television', in Virginia Matheson Hooker, ed., *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1993, 134–48, and Siti Aripurnami, 'A Feminist Comment on the Sinetron Presentation of Indonesian Women', in Sears, ed., *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 248–58.

[20] Daniel S. Lev, 'On the Other Hand?', in Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 198–9.

[21] Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. I, 146–72. A summary of Reid is found in Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 30–1.

boys that went to the religious schools rather than girls. However, Reid argues, even with the gradual strengthening of patriarchal religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism in South East Asia over the last four centuries, the common pattern of high female autonomy and the economic importance of women has not been entirely eliminated.[22] A subsequent book-length study by Barbara Watson Andaya, published nearly two decades later, gives qualified support for these views.[23] A number of reasons are given by both authors for the higher status and economic importance of women in South East Asia, particularly in earlier times: the fact that descent is generally reckoned through both male and female lines, women frequently inheriting property; often prospective husbands have had to pay a price for their brides, in contrast to the dowry systems in India and Europe, where the bride's parents give a dowry; the fact that, in contrast to the patrilocal residence of young couples in South Asia, in South East Asia newly married couples would live with the bride's parents; and the comparative ease of obtaining a divorce, with a woman being able to request a divorce, not just a man.[24]

In addition, Reid reports that observers travelling to South East Asian countries would remark on the comparative sexual freedom of young women. In contrast to English sexual mores, pre-marital sexual relations were regarded in South East Asia 'indulgently, and virginity at marriage was not expected of either party', although once married the women remained loyal to their partners.[25] Reid also recounts a common arrangement whereby women forming sexual liaisons with foreigners temporarily working as traders in many South East Asian ports, including some in the Indonesian archipelago, would be regarded as temporarily married, rather than as prostitutes, the temporary marriage followed by divorce on departure of their partners, and the women also being involved in trading and building businesses through these liaisons.[26] Nor was religious differ-

[22] Ibid., 146 and 153.

[23] In the conclusion to her major book on women in South East Asia in the early modern period, Barbara Watson Andaya offers 'a guarded defense of claims that women have historically been "less inferior" to men than was generally the case in "East Asia," "South Asia," "Melanesia," and to a lesser degree, the Pacific'. She also cites a Chinese map from 1526 'separating Chinese civilization from the barbarians in the "Southeast Asian" region, who "valued women and undervalued men"'. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 227.

[24] Ibid., 227–8.

[25] Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. I, 153–4.

[26] Ibid., 155.

ence a hindrance to such marriages, Christian men and Muslim women, and even vice versa, entering into marriages. Other writings, in different ways, have confirmed or augmented the view that some women had both financial independence and comparative sexual freedom. The Javanese independence leader, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, a mentor of Sukarno, wrote in 1913 of the Javanese woman as the head of the family.[27] Women could even become centres of influence and networking in the societies. Jean Gelman Taylor has emphasized that networks of Eurasian women controlled access to social positions in Batavia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, prior to the implementation of state-controlled colonialism in the early nineteenth century.[28] Carey and Houben have surveyed the various roles women played in the Yogyakarta and Solo courts in the early nineteenth century, just prior to the Java War and the subsequent intensive colonization of Java by the Dutch.[29] They highlight, in particular, the female bodyguard units who accompanied the sultans of both courts—'Amazon corps', known as *prajurit estri*, numbering sometimes 150 skilful female soldiers, selected for their beauty and trained in both military skills and in dancing and singing, some of whom were to fight in the wars of anti-colonial resistance. They also emphasize the great diversity of gender roles at both court and village level, as seen not only in the wandering male singer-dancers dressed in female attire, but in the roles played by the wives of sultans in the amassing of family fortunes, the role of court women as preservers of dynastic alliances, and the roles played by members of the Amazon corps in trade in gold and precious stones.

Nevertheless, most commentators also suggest that the adoption of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago gradually produced changes, resulting in more conservative patriarchal arrangements, and that this occurred more quickly and more fully among the wealthy urban mercantile elite classes, whose 'children were already under more strict control because their marriages involved both property and status'.[30] It is also pos-

[27] Quoted in Sears, 'Introduction', *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 33.

[28] Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia*, Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, 78.

[29] Peter Carey and Vincent Houben, 'Spirited Srikandhis and Sly Sumbadras: The Social, Political and Economic Role of Women at the Central Javanese Courts in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries', in Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Anke Niehof, eds, *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 1992, 18–25.

[30] Reid, *Southeast Asia in an Age of Commerce*, vol. I, 157.

sible that the influence of European patriarchy brought in by the Dutch, especially in the intensive period of colonization after 1820, as women were increasingly relegated to the home, paved the way for patriarchal developments under Suharto.[31] Sociological research into the conditions of village women working in factories in New Order Indonesia in the 1980s confirm that Javanese women are not only the victims of the influence of international patriarchy but also of international corporate capitalism.[32]

Despite the way in which the picture is qualified by these factors, we should remember that Hildred Geertz, on the basis of research in a predominantly Muslim town in East Java in the 1950s, wrote of the matrifocal nature of the Javanese family. Geertz presents the case, based on her fieldwork, that financial power within the average Javanese family rests with, or is conceded to, the wife. In rural areas, after the harvest of the crop, which would be gathered almost entirely by women, the sale of the rice was almost entirely carried out by women, including complex financial transactions. Additionally, markets are almost entirely in the hands of women. Where the husband receives a salary, as in the case of office workers, most of this will be conceded to the wife on the grounds that it is the wife who is the better financial manager: 'men frequently express the belief that they are incapable of handling money carefully', and that women have more thrift and foresight.[33] Geertz argues that matrifocality is only possible if the woman has some financial independence, but that this pertains in the Javanese families that she studied, and that matrifocality, as a phenomenon, is frequently found in societies where finances are insecure. According to Geertz's definition, in a nuclear family that is matrifocal, 'the woman has more authority, influence and responsibility than her husband, and at the same time receives more affection and loyalty'.[34] In terms of the extended family, matrifocality means that the relationships of greatest solidarity are relationships between women, or between people linked by a

[31] Sears, 'Introduction', *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, 33–4.

[32] For a succinct outline of the conditions of young peasant women workers in a newly set-up factory run by a Korean company near Semarang in Central Java in the New Order period, see Diane L. Wolf, 'Javanese Factory Daughters: Gender, the State and Industrial Capitalism', in Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, 140–62.

[33] Geertz, *The Javanese Family*, 122–3.

[34] Ibid., 79.

woman. It is quite common in Java for relatives to be living with a nuclear family, or children to be fostered or adopted, usually by the wife's family, rather than by the family of the husband.

An important recent essay by Suzanne Brenner has extended some aspects of this discussion, not so much questioning the claim that women to some extent have power, but the conceptual field for discussing it. Brenner commences by questioning Benedict Anderson's discussion of power in Javanese society, particularly the notion that the power of the male arises due to his capacity for self-control, suggesting that this concept of power is one that is an ideology of Javanese bureaucratic elites. While Anderson might claim that his discussion of the idea of power in Javanese society was gender neutral, Brenner points out that Anderson illustrates this notion of power entirely through male examples, and she asks why it is that in Java women control markets and that within families they have the power of the purse, a view initially argued by Hildred Geertz but confirmed by Brenner's own research. Brenner answers this by suggesting that women are accorded these roles because they are acknowledged to have greater self-control and greater restraint than men, and she cites a number of Javanese sayings that confirm this as a prevalent view. Brenner's core argument is stated quite simply:

> In accepting control of the family's finances, a woman is entrusted, in a sense, with her husband's desires, his *nafsu*. In other words, she must control not only her *own* passions, but also, to whatever extent possible, those of her husband. Women realize that there are limits to how far they can restrain their husbands' desires, but by controlling the family purse, they do what they can to keep in check a major source of temptation: money.
>
> Just as women conserve material resources for the family by restraining desire, they also conserve spiritual resources through a similar, but more intensive, form of self-discipline.[35]

Brenner argues that, if this view that women have greater self-control than men is sometimes contradicted by the views of other informants, this is because there is no single dominant view among her interviewees, but competing views, depending on to whom one talks, and that a view that women have self-control and that this is exemplified by the mon-

[35] Brenner, 'Why Women Rule the Roost', 35–6.

etary power accorded them, does indeed compete with the ideology that a man's power rests in his self-control, while that ideology ignores totally the issue of self-control in women.[36] The important issue here, anyway, is not simply whether this is broadly true of Javanese women, which would be very difficult to fully demonstrate, but the way in which the notion of the woman, in a culturally specific context, by and large, controlling the desires (*nafsu*) of the husband, and of having that role, opens up a quite new way of conceptualizing male/female relations.

Introduction to Particular Studies of Films

In what follows I will explore at some length three Indonesian films that are significantly different in the way that they represent women, from what is found in mainstream patriarchal cinema elsewhere. In doing so, I will not ignore the issues and concerns that have been raised by Western feminist film theory since the mid 1970s, and indeed my discussion of the first example, *Suci Sang Primadona*, explicitly examines how the gaze is handled in this film, and asks in what senses Suci, the main character, is objectified in the film. But in what follows I will also be introducing a range of other concepts that arise from the preceding discussion of debates in anthropology of the various kinds of social positioning of women in Indonesia: issues of control and self-control, conflict and conflict reduction, body language of individuals and groups, the importance of touch as well as seeing, and so on. Each film discussed has a specific relation to some wider aspect of Indonesian society and culture: *Nji Ronggeng* and *Suci Sang Primadona* deal with specific performance situations in Indonesian popular culture, whether traditional dance or modern music hall performances, while *Sangkuriang* is based on a traditional West Javanese legend.

Suci Sang Primadona ('Suci the Primadonna', 1977)

Arifin C. Noer's *Suci Sang Primadona* dramatizes a music hall singer's relationships with three men older than her, who, unbeknown to each other, support her financially but fail to fulfil her emotionally.

[36] At this point it is worth remembering that in the film *November 1828*, discussed in the previous chapter, the critique of the Indo-Dutch Captain De Borst, in contrast to his Javanese opponents, was that he seriously lacked self-control, a fatal flaw that led to his undoing.

Suci (played by Joice Erna) is a singer and actress at Taman Hiburan Rakyat (People's Pleasure Ground - a kind of amusment park) in the East Javanese city of Surabaya. We see early on that she has three lovers: one a wealthy provincial businessman whose home is in the Central Javanese city of Semarang, and who keeps a house for Suci in Surabaya; another is a retired sea captain who calls intermittently and is affectionate towards Suci, but is impotent; a third is a jealous and amorous local politician. All of them call at her workplace at different times, but she keeps their visits apart from one another. Her triple life is known only to her colleagues: actors, clowns and singers, who work with her in the theatre. A visiting teenager from Jakarta, Eros, stays overnight at her home due to his association with its former owner's night watchman. Suci develops a genuinely affectionate sexual relationship with this young man, who has fled to Surabaya to get away from parental pressures and family fights. The film also spends much time exploring the milieu and characters in the amusement park, but it climaxes when Suci's colleagues secretly organize for her three lovers to come to the same performance one evening, and each is made to believe he is invited to meet her in her dressing room after the show. In 1978 *Suci Sang Primadona* was ranked the fourth most popular film in Jakarta, and won a Citra Award for Joice Erna, for best leading actress in an Indonesian feature film, at the annual Indonesian Film Festival.[37]

In *Suci Sang Primadona*, after the three men are confronted with the fact that none of them has sole possession of her heart, they reject her completely, questioning her honesty and engaging in recriminations, to which she is able to provide a very effective series of responses, questioning their attitudes in turn, their possessiveness, assumptions of ownership and materialism. Krishna Sen's discussion of *Suci Sang Primadona* emphasizes the social attitudes exposed by the film, particularly her three ageing lovers' shared view that their relationship with her has nothing to do with their wives: 'The wife is a matter of the household. This is outside the house.' As Sen shows, by the end of the film we see the contradictions that Suci's dilemma exposes: she is a 'woman who *is* sexual and who must perform simultaneously as virgin, prostitute and mother'. For Sen, the film also explores Eros' 'investigation of Suci as his rite of passage into adulthood, and … Suci's investigation of Eros, the erotic, which has never before been present in her life as a prostitute'.[38] The high point of the film is probably

[37] J.B. Kristanto, *Katalog Film Indonesia 1926–2005*, Jakarta, Nalar, 2005, 167.

not so much the scenes of the consternation of the three lovers when they meet each other outside her dressing room, but rather the scene immediately prior to this, the song Suci sings in her act in the performance that night, with each of the lovers in the audience, and Eros watching from a side door. In contrast to Sen's discussion, which examines the social attitudes diagnosed in the film, my discussion here examines the structure of the intersecting gazes in the scene in which Suci sings with all three of her lovers in the audience, and contrasts the structure of intersecting looks with the paradigm of the male gaze outlined by Mulvey, discussed above.

The song that Suci (her name means 'pure') sings is a famous Indonesian popular song about what it is like to be a prostitute. Here are the words (my translation):

'Kupu-Kupu Malam'—Night Butterflies

Ada yang benci dirinya.	There are those who hate her.
Ada yang butuh dirinya.	There are those who need her.
Ada yang berlutut menyintanya.	There are those who woo her on their knees.
Ada pula yang kejam menyiksa dirinya.	There are also those who cruelly torture her.
Ini hidup wanita si kupu-kupu malam.	This is the life of a woman who is a butterfly of the night.
Bekerja bertaruh seluruh jiwa raga	In her work she stakes her whole body and soul
Bibir senyum, kata halus	With smiling lips, refined words
Merayu manja kepada	Flattering and spoiling
Setiap mereka yang datang.	Each of those who come.
Dosakah yang dia kerjakan?	Is what she does a sin?
Sucikah mereka yang datang?	Are they pure who visit her?
Kadang dia tersenyum dalam tangis.	Sometimes she smiles while weeping.
Kadang dia menangis di dalam senyuman.	Sometimes she weeps in the midst of smiles.
Ooo . . . Apa yang terjadi	Ooo … whatever happens,
… terjadilah.	… happens.
Yang dia tahu	What she knows
Tuhan penyayang umatnya.	God is merciful to humanity.
Ooo . . . Apa yang terjadi	Ooo … whatever happens,
… terjadilah.	… happens.
Yang dia tahu hanyalah	What she knows
Menyambung nyawa.	Is all part of life.

[38] Krishna Sen, 'Repression and Resistance: Interpretations of the Feminine in New Order Cinema', in Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1993, 122.

This song is well known in Indonesia. It was written by Titiek Puspa, a singer celebrated for her songs about ordinary people, particularly the poor and those on the margins of society. It is Titiek Puspa's voice, with its clear and firm enunciation of her own lyrics, that is the voice heard singing the song in the film, and not in fact the voice of the actress playing Suci, Joice Erna. [39] It is possible the film itself was conceived with this song in mind. The song dramatizes powerfully the contradictions of the life of a woman of the night, and the music, with its long cadences, provides a bold framework for launching the song's insights to the audience. The song, in itself, is a kind of transgression because, often sung in nightclubs, it affirms the dignity of the sex worker and challenges its listeners as to the hypocrisy of society over the double standards in attitudes to prostitution, where the sex worker is more often condemned by the law, and by society, than is her customer.[40] But this scene of the singing to a live audience of this wonderful song is also a remarkable moment in cinema. Generally the camera is placed in the position of spectators in the hall of the amusement park, though slightly more elevated than they are, and often closer to Suci. In other words the camera is not simply identified with the exact position of any of Suci's client-lovers. While the camera shows these clients in the auditorium, and they gaze at Suci, it does not put them into a position of control or power over her, or over her image. Rather, all three of her client-lovers are so deeply moved by the song and her image as she sings the song, that their faces, each respectively shown in medium shot or medium close-up, are contorted, revealing each of the men unable to control his emotions and unable to control his feelings for her, displaying even, perhaps, their shame at the way they are challenged by the song. It is clear that the song can be experienced as a statement made to each of them personally. The point is not lost that what Suci sings in the lyrics is an accurate statement of her relationship to these clients (although not to her young friend, Eros), and the contradictions that these men—and the social role she must play—put her in.

In this scene the position of the woman as spectacle, both eroticized and investigated, as outlined by Mulvey as frequently found in films by

[39] The Indonesian lyrics for the song 'Kupu-Kupu Malam', and their English translation by David Hanan, are published with the kind permission of the author of the song, Titiek Puspa.

[40] The original powerful vocal 'Kupu-Kupu Malam', sung by Titiek Puspa, and used in the film, is at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-r8adpVeuY, accessed 4 June 2016.

Alfred Hitchcock and Joseph von Sternberg, is in some respects reversed. While Suci is undoubtedly the object of the gaze of the audience and of the camera, she is not investigated, and her discourse controls the scene. It is the three lovers seated in the audience who are objectified by the camera, in that it is their guilt, shame and awe that is investigated by the camera's look. There is one often cited similar moment in a film made in the West, a theatre scene in the celebrated 1940 film, *Dance, Girl, Dance,* directed by Dorothy Arzner, one of the few women directors to work in early Hollywood. In Arzner's film, however, the statement against male lewdness and concomitant hypocrisy is made not in a song but in a statement of direct anger by the film's central character, the dancer Judy (played by Maureen O'Hara), a performer who steps out of her role to speak to the audience after being heckled by men, and whose anger provokes some shame in her audience.[41] Such moments are comparatively rare in cinema, and this scene in *Suci Sang Primadona*, more than in the Arzner film, is a moment where the woman remains a performing spectacle but in effect, while performing, makes a statement about her social position that rejects the ways in which she can be objectified. Incidentally, the transgressive nature of Suci, and the threat she poses to the audience, is momentarily alluded to earlier, when, briefly glimpsed performing in a comedy skit, she comes on stage and waves around a gun.

Despite the foregoing, I should point out that Suci's temporary challenge to her audience, both in the theatre and in the cinema, does not free her from the context of her ongoing life. In the last scene of the film, Suci, having left the amusement park, asks her driver to take her back, not to her house but to her village of origin, so she can come to some inner self-reconciliation after the showdown with her three clients, leaving behind even her young friend Eros. She is taken there by her regular driver, who late in the film confesses that he too loves her, but that he is a married man and has controlled his feelings for her, and not even revealed them to her. In the course of Suci's conversation with her mother at the door of the little family home, we learn for the first time in the film that she has two young children (information deliberately withheld until this point in

[41] For further information on *Dance, Girl, Dance*, see Claire Johnston, ed., *Dorothy Arzner: Towards a Feminist Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 1975, and Judith Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*, Bloomington and Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1994.

the film) and that is why she has paying lovers, something that the three clients know nothing of, as well. Her full social context is the point of the ending of the film, and the audience too has not been let in on the secret until now.

At this point I wish to adduce two further examples of portraits of strength in women in Indonesian cinema, portraits in cinema that deserve attention not because I want to claim they are representative of how women are frequently represented in Indonesian cinema, but because, as textual phenomena, they are relatively unique internationally.

Sangkuriang (1982)

Sangkuriang was the third most popular film released in Jakarta in 1982, and is one of the more subtle of the numerous Indonesian mystic-legend genre films directed by Sisworo Gautama Putra. The film starred the gracious Suzzanna, who is best known as the star of many films about the mysterious goddess of the Southern Ocean, Nyi Roro Kidul.[42] The story of *Sangkuriang*, however, is based on a West Javanese legend with a long history in oral tradition stemming at least from the Hindu-Buddhist period, the first written record to mention it being in the late fifteenth century.[43] The film has numerous scenes of its hero, Sangkuriang, overcoming hordes of opponents in somewhat repetitive and woodenly staged martial arts sequences, using trick effects and a form of martial arts closer to *kung fu* than to Indonesian *silat*, but it also tells a remarkable and, at times, subtly nuanced story. The West Javanese origins of the story are signalled through the use intermittently in the film of the distinctively subtle and tentative notes of the West Javanese flute (*suling*). Indeed, in the pre-credit sequence the central female character, Princess Sumbi, is

[42]The figure of Nyi Roro Kidul is discussed in Chap. 2.

[43]The story is a well-known Indonesian folk legend, the legend of Tangkuban Perahu (the upturned boat), named after a curiously shaped mountain in West Java, 30 kilometres to the north of Bandung. The first written reference to the Sangkuriang legend appeared in the *Bujangga Manik* manuscript, written on palm leaves towards the end of the fifteenth century. In archaic Sundanese, it narrates how Prince Jaya Pakuan, alias Prince Bujangga Manik, visited all of the holy Hindu sites in Java and Bali at that time. This palm manuscript was taken to England by an Englishmen and deposited in the Bodleian library, Oxford, in 1627. This poem has recently been published in English in the collection J. Noorduyn and A. Teeuw, eds, *Three Old Sundanese Poems*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 2006.

introduced alone, in nature, weaving a cloth in a small *pendopo* (pavilion) in a large and fertile field, against a background of mountains, the opening moments of the sequence accompanied by a woman's voice singing a West Javanese *tembang* (free-verse poem), accompanied by a *suling* and a *kacapi*, a zither-like instrument using two pitches.

The legend of Sangkuriang bears some striking similarities to the Oedipus story, and yet has important differences, as a reading of a synopsis of the film reveals.

Synopsis of *Sangkuriang*

Having dropped the cylinder containing her thread from the raised *pendopo* where she is sewing, Dayang Sumbi makes a vow: either to become a lifelong friend of the person who retrieves it (if a woman), or to marry that person (if a man). Almost immediately she finds that a lowly servant, Lengser, climbs the staircase to return the cylinder to her. When she becomes pregnant by Lengser, her father, Raja Prabangkara, is so angry he turns Lengser into a dog and exiles Sumbi. Sumbi, accompanied only by the dog, named Tumang, bears Lengser's child, a boy named Sona. When Sona is about 12 years old, one day Sumbi asks Sona if he could bring her the liver of a deer. Out on the hunt Sona does not succeed in killing a deer, and in his haste to shoot at one, accidentally wounds Tumang with an arrow. The dying dog turns into Lengser. Beseeching Sona to cut his liver from his dying body, as he dies Lengser urges Sona to take it to Sumbi. Sumbi is so angry at the death of the dog that she strikes Sona a blow on the head and throws him out, despite him bleeding from a head wound. Wandering in a forest during a storm, Sona falls exhausted on the ground. He is awoken by a voice that calls out that Sona has been chosen by the gods to live with them, and that he will obtain *kuriang*, the power of nature, by living with the gods. Sona, accompanied by a monkey and a snake, is trained by nature, learning to emulate and to master its forces. In this way he grows to manhood. He can control eruptions of nature, and even fire, with the special mental powers he has attained. A voice is heard again, this time telling him that nine years have passed, that he has learned all he needs to know, and that his body is now a *sangkur*, a vessel for *kuriang*, the power of nature, and that he should henceforth call himself 'Sangkuriang', and that he, with his new and unusual powers, is needed by many people.

It is at this point that the Oedipal encounter occurs. Sangkuriang returns to his grandfather's kingdom, not knowing that he himself is the grandson of the king, and he defends the peasants from raiding parties sent out by the king to tax the peasants. When fleeing from the king's soldiers he encounters a woman named Larasati, and they fall in love. Eventually Larasati, who lives in a peasant village but who is Sumbi in disguise, realizes that Sangkuriang is her son, first coming to suspect this when she recognizes a gesture of her son's, as Sangkuriang comes out of a river where he has been swimming, holding out to her a fish. Later, having recognized a scar on his head, and remembering its origins in the blow she gave Sona on hearing of the dog's death, she begins to resist the continuation of the romance and Sangkuriang's increasing aspirations to marry her. Eventually, in order to deflect his desires, she tells him she will marry him if he can dam the Citarum River, make a lake and build a large boat that will sail on it, all tasks to be completed by dawn of the next day. While attempting to dam the Citarum River Sangkuriang encounters Raja Prabangkara, whom he fights and kills, not knowing that Prabangkara is his grandfather. Sumbi, seeing that he may complete the task, implores the gods to make the dawn arrive a little earlier. When Sangkuriang just fails to complete all the set tasks for completion at dawn, in frustration he kicks the boat, which then becomes a mountain, known in West Java as Tangkuban Perahu (the upturned boat). Sangkuriang still implores Sumbi to marry him, repeatedly advancing towards her and denying she is his mother. When he embraces her, he finds he is embracing a small flowering tree, with white flowers on it. The film then concludes with a coda, saying that Sangkuriang finally accepted his mother's admonitions, and we sense that the energy he put into pursuing her is now fully redirected to his championing of the people and building up the region. The final shots of the film show images of the regional capital, Bandung, reminding the viewer that this is an important region, and that in 1955 Bandung was the site of the 'Asia-Afrika Conference', suggesting that all this is the result of initiatives commenced by Sangkuriang.

In the film, as we can see, this story is presented as at once a foundation myth, and a story about how creativity and responsibility can arise out of the sublimation of inappropriate desire. Note that the film and the legend do not present us with quite the view of an autonomous South East Asian woman outlined by Reid, for until she flees to the forest, Princess Sumbi's life in the court is controlled and dominated by her imperious father, Raja Prabangkara, especially after the conflict with her father over the marriage. Raja Prabangkara is increasingly regarded in the course of the film as an unjust ruler, whom the youthful Sona-Sangkuriang must curb. The film sees Sumbi as having great personal strength, wisdom and self-control, but it does not suggest that she is free from an oppressive patriarchal social context; rather she has to flee from it, and her son's role is to oppose the power of the court.[44]

The issue of incest with the mother clearly invites comparison with the Sophocles play. In contrast to Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*, Sangkuriang kills not only his father, which he does accidentally when he mistakenly shoots the dog, Tumang, but also his grandfather. However, whereas Oedipus marries his mother and blinds himself on discovering the truth, Sangkuriang's mother recognizes him, and so incest is avoided because the woman goes through a protracted process of refusal, while remaining affectionate towards her would-be incestuous son. The Oedipus leg-

[44]A variety of versions of the legend were still to be found in villages in West Java in the 1970s. They are discussed in Soehenda Iskar and Didi Suryadi, *Sasakala Sangkuriang: Sebuah Penelitian Lapangan Folkloristik dari Daerah Sumedang*, Bandung, Lembaga Kebudayaan, Universitas Padjadjaran, 1975. Additionally, the poet and short story writer, Ajip Rosidi, has retold the story in a very full version, *Sang Kuriang Kesiangan: Sebuah Cerita Rakyat Sunda*, Jakarta, Pustaka Jaya, 1975. In the Rosidi version, as in some of the village versions, Tumang was originally a god, transformed into a dog as punishment for a crime, and exiled to earth—by the Mother Goddess and Queen of Heaven, Batari Sunan Ambu—along with the Goddess Celeng Wayungyang, who was incarnated as a boar. In this version, Celeng Wayungyang was accidentally impregnated by Raja Prabangkara—when she drank his urine, excreted during a hunting trip—and gave birth to Sumbi Dayang within a few hours, the newborn baby being discovered and adopted by Raja Prabangkara. The film removes these elements of prior links to both an animal and a chthonian world, but the presence of these elements in the fuller versions suggests that, in its grouping together of humans, gods and animals, the myth shares dimensions Claude Lévi-Strauss has isolated in the Oedipus myth in his discussion of its various levels in 'The Structural Study of Myth', namely '*the persistence of the autochthonous origin of man*', in other words, the terrestrial origin of humans. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, 214–16.

end has been analysed by Freud as a paradigm of human development, an allegory of infantile development, with the male child, under 'normal circumstances', eventually resolving its 'Oedipus complex' by repressing its desire for the mother out of fear of the father, or out of fear of killing the father. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan emphasizes, even more than Freud, that the resolution of the Oedipus complex is the foundation of sociality, taking the child out of the dyadic relationship with its original carer. The Indonesian legend provides an alternative way of construing the incest prohibition, with the mother, at some stage in human development, playing a role in repressing the incestuous desire, the incest prohibition arising not from the immediate father, nor even from the fear of the father, who is absent. This film text, and the well-known legend on which it is based, presents a discourse about a woman's role and capacity for restraint that differs from that in the Oedipus story, and which also presents a view of the woman as a source of restraint and self-control that accords with Brenner's discussion of the role of the Javanese woman in the family.[45] As well, a psychologist might argue that the protagonist, Sangkuriang, at the end of the film having internalized (or in some sense identified with) his lost object, his mother, is able to initialize within himself a capacity for restraint which earlier was lacking. But for my purposes, this legend should not be seen primarily as an allegory about the early development of the infant. This is a legend about the formation of a culture in the adult world, and the woman's structural position and influence within this. Ultimately the woman, and her sensibility and intelligence, are given a structural role in the aetiology of the capacity for restraint as a productive element within the social formation, while the man is represented as having to learn this restraint from the woman.

Moreover, in so far as the story may be seen as a psychological allegory, I am not necessarily arguing here, in some complete theoretical overturning of Freud, that the mother here has entirely replaced the father or the need for the father. Rather, it might be assumed that Sumbi has herself internalized the incest prohibition, and that by exercising restraint she simply applies a social sanction. The story is varied and complex, and there are many contributing factors to Sona's development, some of which may be interpreted using even a Jungian framework. While Sona never knows his father in human form (and loses his father when he kills the dog,

[45] Brenner, 'Why Women Rule the Roost', 19–50.

Tumang), subsequently, in his adolescence, now absent from his mother, he encounters archetypal forces in nature—associated with the gods, and introduced to him by a male voice that calls to him in a cave in the night—which nurture and educate him outside of both human civilization and maternal influence.

With regard to the issue of restraint, we should note further certain textual details. When Sumbi, having dropped her cylinder containing her thread (then retrieved by Lengser), accepts the consequences of her vow to marry that person (if a man), what she in fact has done is to expose the future course of her life—the thread of her life—to chance, and to remain faithful to the consequences of doing so. A similar act of devotion is found to be a characteristic of Lengser, who, emerging from the dying dog, quickly remembers, as he too dies, to offer his own liver, to be cut from his dying body, as a token of his love for his wife. So within this couple we see embodied a deep capacity for loyalty, whether to a vow, a principle or a person. But rather than being a tragedy, this story is an epic, spanning four generations of people and more than 20 years of narrative time, and resulting in the formation of a hero, and a society. But it is also a story that at certain points turns on small but crucial details, of great moral import, thus also giving it the quality of a moral fable. And rather than the central characters reacting to situations wildly, as does Oedipus at times, in this foundational story about incest, and its refusal, actions are closely related to thought. Furthermore, while within the Oedipus story the servants, in effect without knowing it, serve to convey Oedipus back to his place within the elite of Theban society, in the legend of the upturned boat we have a movement of central characters away from identification with the court. Sumbi, by accepting the consequences of her vow to marry the lowly Lengser, is removed from the court for the rest of her life, and their son, Sangkuriang, is trained by the gods to become a defender of the little people against the ravages of the tyrant. Moreover, while the title of the film is the name of the hero, who undergoes a series of trials to make him a worthy hero, the real hero of the film is Sumbi herself, the mother. Interestingly, in the portrait of the court, we find that while Raja Prabangkara, as the male, controls the kingdom, indeed is meant to be its protector, the film shows his own mother acting as an advisor, and at a few (all too few) crucial moments, she herself restrains her son from rash actions, such as his command, on discovering the truth of his daughter's marriage, that both Sumbi and Lengser be executed. Thus two women are

the figures of both moral authority and wisdom in the film, qualities that are seen as differing from social power.

As within both the epic and the fable, individual subjectivity is not the primary concern of the narrative. Rather the primary focus is the overall meaning of the story as a fable or a parable, and what it tells us about the society and the implications of human actions. And indeed the positioning of the camera throughout the film tends to serve the interests of the story rather than to create a particular emphasis on any one character's subjectivity and his/her emotions. Additionally, rather than Sumbi being investigated by the camera, it is Sangkuriang, with his irrational refusal to accept his mother's statements as to who she is, particularly later in the film, who is investigated and whose drives become objectified by the camera.

There are some further details in the film that are significant. When Sangkuriang-Sona comes out of the river, holding out a fish to his beloved Larasati, sitting waiting for him on the river bank, as he emerges Sangkuriang reminds her he is naked, and Larasati quickly goes and fetches his clothes, hiding her eyes, and then hands the clothes to him as he stands waist deep in the water. At this point he grabs her and playfully pulls her under the water with him. This shot is followed by a transition not to shots of them under water, but to shots in which the two of them travel towards each other, dressed in regal clothes, like archetypal royal figures or gods, sitting in low-backed thrones, initially facing away from each other, in a mysterious bluish mystical space. These shots signify not only their royalty or god-like qualities, but perhaps might be read as signifying some noble union that exists between them, perhaps even an internal balance already achieved between mother and son. This balance is then threatened as the scene develops, and Sangkuriang moves to embrace and to kiss Larasati-Sumbi. At this point winds begin to blow and the couple begin to move in a wild circle, as though caught in a whirlpool, the rotations becoming increasingly fast. There is a cut to Sumbi, in ordinary peasant clothes, suddenly waking and sitting up, contemplating the disturbing dream she has just had. It is subsequent to this dream that she discovers the scar on Sangkuriang's head, and from this point on she seeks to distance herself from Sangkuriang's ardour. Also of theoretical interest, as we shall see, is the scene later in the film, where Larasati-Sumbi goes through a series of attempts to repress the ardent Sona-Sangkuriang: at no point does she lose her affection for him, or in any climactic way express frustration, enmity or rejection. When ultimately he persists and embraces and kisses her yet again, even after failing to complete the task she has assigned him, she

simply withdraws, transforming herself into a bush with numerous white flowers.

What are the possible theoretical implications of this story? Freud saw Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as a story drawing attention to a crucial phase in human development, the relinquishing of incestuous desire for the mother necessary for the achievement of 'normal' psychosexual development. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud sees this as aided by the threat of castration from the father. Given that the foundational story of 'incest resisted' in the Sumbi-Sangkuriang legend has similarities with the Oedipus story, but also very significant differences, we might ask in what way does it raise questions for Freud's paradigm; or can it be construed in terms of another paradigm? In answer to the first question we might consider Barbara Creed's remarks about Freud and Lacan's discussion of the castration complex. Creed writes:

> Entry into the symbolic order is a long and gradual process in which the mother, for a number of complex reasons, plays an active role but one that has been rendered invisible in relation to the Freudian theory of castration. The problem is that the processes whereby the infant separates itself from the mother, and the role she plays in this, are not clearly delineated. With its emphasis on law, logic and rationality, the language of the symbolic order does not easily tolerate borders, boundaries and processes that interweave in complex and various ways.[46]

As regards other possible paradigms, the gentle but firm repression of the son in *Sangkuriang* might be interpreted in terms of Bateson and Mead's discussion of stimulation and frustration of the child by the mother, leading to what Bateson described as 'the steady state' (already discussed in Chap. 5), where the mother produces in the child an expectation that attempts at interaction will not always be reciprocated.[47]

Nji Ronggeng ('The *Ronggeng* Dancer', 1969)

Our next example is also an Indonesian film in which a woman comes to have agency, authority and power. The film draws on imagery deeply

[46] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, London, Routledge, 1993, 164–5.

[47] Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, New York, The New York Academy of Sciences, 1942, 148–63 (Plates 47–54).

rooted in the Javanese past, and, more centrally, it draws on very old performance traditions in which touch, and hence the notion of a touch culture, is central to the story and the society. Because *Nji Ronggeng* is about a performer who stands up to her audience and her clients, the film also has some similarity to *Suci Sang Primadona*. But *Nji Ronggeng* (directed by Alam Surawidjaja) will now be explored in order to suggest further dimensions of cultural difference raised in my second example, by the story of Princess Sumbi and her relation to her son, Sangkuriang.

Nji Ronggeng, filmed on location in West Java in 1969, is one of the most remarkable fiction films yet made about popular culture and folk traditions in Indonesia.[48] Its story is set among the members of a 1930s touring *ronggeng* dance troupe, and within a broadly melodramatic plot, involving the pursuit of the heroine, Nji Sari, by Ohim, a man obsessed with her, and her ultimate successful pairing with her 'true' partner, Dadang, the film reconstructs performances of the *ronggeng* dance as they are supposed to have occurred in village squares and carnivals in West Java in the 1930s. Thematically, in the development of its story, the film encapsulates many of the implications for erotic behaviour and sexual experience of this social ritual and form of entertainment, the *ronggeng* dance.

The *ronggeng* dance, similar to the Balinese *joget*, is a subtle, skilful and sensuous dance, performed in public places by both paid and unpaid female dancers. In these dances, while the woman's dance provides an erotic spectacle, the woman—usually a professional dancer—invites men from the crowd to dance with her, sometimes having the power to dismiss them if their dancing is not satisfactory to her. In the film, the particular form the *ronggeng* dance takes is one where male partners are invited to try to touch the woman's hair while dancing with her, and where, in her own dancing, the woman tries to avoid this, and even to deflect her partner's attempts to touch her hair, by using defensive hand movements used in the traditional Indonesian form of self-defence, known as *silat*.

[48] Longer versions of this discussion of *Nji Ronggeng* are to be found in David Hanan, '*The Ronggeng Dancer*: Another Paradigm for Erotic Spectacle in the Cinema', *East-West Film Journal* 6 (1), January 1992, 156–89, and in David Hanan, *Nji Ronggeng*: Another Paradigm for Erotic Spectacle in the Cinema', in Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Kuala Lumpur and London, Oxford University Press, 1993, 87–115. The second of these, published by Oxford University Press in Kuala Lumpur, is copiously illustrated.

At this point it is essential to provide some information about the function and history of the *ronggeng* dance. The basic *ronggeng* dance is found in many parts of Indonesia—in Java, Sumatra and Bali—and performances were widespread throughout the Indonesian and Malay Archipelago in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In many of these places the dance takes different forms, sometimes having different social functions and even different names. In parts of Java the dance is known as the *joged*, and bears some relation to the Balinese *joget*, though there are some very important differences between the Balinese *joget*, and *joged* and *ronggeng* found in Java, which almost certainly can be understood in terms of differences between the cultures.

Claire Holt sees these dances as stemming from Hindu-Buddhist times, in that some of the dances depicted in wall reliefs in the ninth-century Buddhist *stupa* at Borobudur seem to be prototypes of what we see today.[49] The practice of a single female singer-dancer choosing partners appears to have been part of court entertainment in festivals after the harvest at Majapahit in East Java in the fourteenth century. It is thought that even if by then these dances had been largely secularized, they had their origins in antiquity in sacred dances in which the dancer personified or acted as shaman for an indigenous female deity, for example Nyi Roro Kidul, the Queen of the Southern Ocean, or the rice goddess, Dewi Sri. The sacred character of the dance is alluded to in the credit sequence of *Nji Ronggeng*, in Nji Sari's initial bow and genuflection, and in the prayer-like character of her opening hand movements. According to Goldsworthy, in Central Java even in the 1970s *joged* dances occurred as part of dance-parties (*tayuban*) held after the harvest, when money is plentiful.

> The woman (who may occasionally be a man in woman's clothing) dances alone during the first part of the performance. Free dancing (*joged tayub*) begins when the *tledek* approaches a man at the party and touches him with her dance scarf (*slendang*). This invitation to dance initiates a series of dances with different men who pay for this privilege by offering money to the girl as they dance around her and try to touch her.[50]

[49] Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and* Change, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1967, 109–15.

[50] David Goldsworthy, 'Melayu Music of North Sumatra: Continuities and Change', PhD thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, 1979, 379.

Several elements of the West Javanese *ronggeng* dance in the film *Nji Ronggeng* are also found specifically in the Balinese *joget* in its traditional form (and even in the *joget bung bung*, nowadays performed for tourists), though there are also very significant differences. According to Goldsworthy, in Bali the long-established tradition of professional *joget* dancing was still popular as a form of village entertainment in public places in 1978:

> A Balinese *joget* always combines solo display, dancing by one of a series of professional girl dancers on the one hand, and social dancing with a series of male partners on the other. For the first part of her performance the girl executes the complex head, hand and torso movements of dances in the *legong* style, in which she has received extensive training. After this solo dance, she invites men to come up and dance with her by rapping the man of her choice with her dance fan. The dance style for this social dance is simpler and more improvised with the emphasis on footwork. The man continually attempts to come closer to the girl who skilfully evades his advances, much to the merriment of the crowd.[51]

It is not only in the inclusion of traditional Balinese dance forms such as the *legong* that this Balinese dance can be identified as different from that found in Java, but in aspects of its social contextualization, for in Bali the men who dance with the girls do not pay for the right to dance, rather a lump sum as payment has already been arranged by the village. Moreover, in Bali this type of dancing is never associated with prostitution, as it commonly is in Java, and as it is in the film *Nji Ronggeng*. It is also noteworthy that, unlike the situation in *Nji Ronggeng*, in Bali it is the woman dancer who chooses the partner, and the choice is made very decorously and pointedly, using a special fan.

We can see then that the *ronggeng* dance in the film is more than simply an erotic spectacle, for, like the Balinese *joget*, it is a highly structured social ritual, in which the male partner's attitude to the woman, his exhibitionism, his pride and his capacity for self-control, also become part of the public spectacle. This, in fact, becomes the dramatic subject of the film *Nji Ronggeng*. In the film the false suitor, the paying partner, Ohim, repeatedly attempts to engage erotically with Nji Sari within a dance situ-

[51] Ibid., 379–80.

ation, the most significant being the first occasion, which occurs at about 23 minutes into the film, deliberately set up as a major thematic statement and turning point in the story. In this scene, Ohim is a paying partner with Nji Sari, and makes an attempt to touch her hair, agreeing to work within the rules, but in fact he transgresses the rules and is eventually called to order and prevented from continuing by the stage manager, the father of Nji Sari (although Nji Sari protests that she could have handled this customer). The dangers of having a paying customer-partner are alluded to in a flashback narrating the death of Nji Sari's mother, when she intervenes in a fight between two jealous men, both of whom wish to have priority in possessing her sexually.

What are the implications of the staging of this scene of interactive dancing that occurs some 23 minutes into the film, and of others like it, subsequently?

First, in this dance, while the woman dancer is an erotic spectacle for the male spectators, her male partner also becomes part of the spectacle, perhaps not as an erotic spectacle in the same sense, but at least in the sense that his behaviour is watched by the spectators (and by the cinema audience) and is subject to their assessment. In Mulvey's terms, he too is subject to their investigative gaze (as occurs in *Suci Sang Primadona*). Indeed, Ohim is part of the spectacle in a number of senses, including an erotic dimension, which he himself invites. He begins his dance by turning away towards the crowd, mainly comprised of males, addressing them with subtle dance movements of the arms and head, as though parading his snake-like beauty, power and capacity for bodily control, and then advances towards the crowd to the right, away from Nji Sari, continuing to impress on the crowd his suitability as a wooer, before advancing back towards her where, within a few seconds of having begun to dance with her, he has already launched an attack to try and touch her hair bun (Fig. 7.2).

Second, the rules of the dance give authority to the woman, rather than to the man. This is because the male partner must dance within the rules, rules arbitrated by the woman which require that he should dance with restraint and fairness, even if in a state of desire. Hence, the dance breaks down that arrangement, described by Mulvey and outlined above, whereby the woman is seen only as the object of the male gaze, either eroticized or investigated, and has neither authority nor power, which are vested in the male. This rigid and paranoid structure, which Mulvey convincingly argues occurs in quite a number of films, is replaced with a play-

Fig. 7.2 The aggressive 'suitor', Ohim, begins his wooing dance with *ronggeng* dancer, Nji Sari, in which he will attempt to touch her hair bun, while she will defend herself, parrying his arms using *silat* (Indonesian martial arts) movements, in *Nji Ronggeng* (1969), set in West Java in the 1930s (Courtesy of Sinematek Indonesia)

ful structure in which the woman arbitrates the rules, and the man, who is also partly eroticized, must agree to dance within them, and his capacity to do this is open to investigation by the viewer.

Third, the notion of erotic pleasure as exclusively or primarily a pleasure of looking is not the only way in which this dance should be understood, for the reason that the sensuous bodily movements characteristic of these highly interactive and communal dances (and characteristic of much Javanese and Balinese dance) of outstretched arms and extended fingers, all mime and tangibly display the very idea of desire as being expressed by reaching out, and by sensuous touching—and of the simultaneous need for control and refinement. Moreover, the Indonesian word used by the stage manager when he invites spectators from the crowd to attempt to touch Nji Sari's hair bun, '*menyentuh*', is very specific, and means to 'lightly touch' or 'to stroke', and it has connotations of gentleness and refinement, as well as sexual connotations.

Fourth, there are a number of features of the dance which suggest that one should fundamentally reconceptualize the Mulvey paradigm, replacing many of its assumptions, if one is going to use it fully to understand both the dance and the film. Perhaps instead of the comparatively reductive Freudian influenced paradigm of the woman as object of the male gaze, passive before the dual drives of voyeurism and fetishism, one should

consider rather the woman's activity within the dance performance and the spectacle. Within this new framework, one could regard the dance performance as a mode of address by the woman, and analyse the structure of that mode of address as a structure which is informed by some codes of erotic behaviour within the society, which are understood as meaningful by the woman participant, and which have been internalized by her and are deployed within the performance. Here the deployment of these erotic codes can be regarded as a skill, in ways analogous to the way in which the deployment of codes of *silat*—(a specifically Indonesian form of martial arts, which emphasizes self-defence rather than aggression) by the same dancer to prevent the man from being able to touch her hair—is a skill. Indeed this new paradigm allows one to see that the specific type of *ronggeng* dance shown in the film (which has structural analogies with the Balinese *joget*) has a structure in which the woman, having stimulated desire through the performance of the dance, then resists the fulfilment of its aims, except as a rule-governed activity which demands simultaneously certain skills and a certain decorum in the man, including the psychological ability to withstand his own jealousy and public embarrassment, if not humiliation.

Given the foregoing considerations, in this dance we have a dialectic of stimulation and control, which results in maximizing eroticism, but also in controlling and refining it. It might be considered that this type of refinement and control, shown in the dances, is evident to a particularly marked degree in Java and Bali, although even between these two islands there are certain differences. For what is expressed in these dances may well also inform erotic behaviour at many levels of the society, in fact significantly defining the pervasive erotic culture as a whole. In Muslim Java this type of erotic display has been subject to some degree of social ostracism, as the film shows. Moreover, in Java the *ronggeng* dancer is paid by her partner for the right to dance with her, while in Bali a professional *joget* dancer is paid by the village council (*banjar*) to perform the dance, which is highly valued both as a traditional form of community entertainment and as a way of socializing the young men of the village.

The most appropriate theoretical model to account for the aetiology and development of this behaviour would not be the writings of Freud, but a set of theoretical considerations we have introduced in Chap. 5, Bateson and Mead's account of Balinese emotional ethos as inherently non-schismogenic (that is, precluding symmetrical cumulative interactions of a conflictual kind), approximating to a plateau or 'steady state'.

This is achieved at the stage of childrearing by the way in which the infant's mother, having stimulated mutual interaction between herself and her child, then at a certain stage in the infant's development begins to refuse to respond to the interaction initiated by the child, something that the child must learn to handle.[52] The refusal by the mother to respond to the child's desire for interaction, even though previously she has stimulated the child, produces a general expectation in the culture that desire will not always be able to be reciprocated or fulfilled; but rather than this resulting simply in repression, it results in the dialectic of stimulation and control, posited in this chapter. This experience is internalized by the child as part of its social identity. As in the Sumbi and Sangkuriang legend, the prohibition against desire comes from the female as well as from a patriarchal figure. It is my contention that the capacity to play finely with emotional thresholds, and to maintain a deep but non-conflictual detachment, both of which are learned from infancy on, are fundamental to the games played in the *ronggeng/joget* dances.

All this can lead us back to consider the limitations of Mulvey's paradigm in its initial formulation. Fundamental to Mulvey's account is an assumption that 'the male gaze' is not just voyeuristic, but that it is also in some sense controlling (scopophilia 'takes other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze'); and that the body of the woman is sometimes controlled and becomes nothing more than the image of male desire. Mulvey postulates three gazes: the camera gaze, the gaze of the male character, and the gaze of the viewer, all of which, in the final analysis, can be assimilated one to the other in her model, as male gazes. But there is a further gaze implicit to her account, the directorial gaze, which can be seen most clearly in her discussion of Hitchcock and von Sternberg. Here it is clear that the controlling element in voyeurism and fetishism arises not only because the camera look is identified with a male character's desire, but because the male director has the power to organize all elements of the *mise en scène* and subject them to his will in the creation of the film, including the woman's body. Under the direction of

[52] See Gregory Bateson, 'Bali: The Value System of a Steady State', in Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2000, 108–9; Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character, A Photographic Analysis*, 148–63.

Hitchcock, her body is subjected to an investigative gaze, and in the case of von Sternberg, to a fetishistic gaze.

But if one considers again the *ronggeng* dance as it is performed in the film, or the Balinese *joget*, one finds that the structures exemplified here—where the woman (usually a professional dancer) stimulates eroticism, and then makes erotic interaction a rule-governed activity by partially refusing it and making the male accept this—can be seen as systematically enforcing, within the context of the dance, the idea that the woman's body, or rather her desire, is not simply the image of male desire, driving a wedge, so to speak, between her body and male desire in its unrestrained scopophilic aspects.

There are some minor qualifications I would make here to my argument, with its emphasis on dimensions in this scene other than those discussed by Mulvey in her account of 'the gaze' in patriarchal cinema, dimensions such as the male partner also being on display and subject to judgement, that might be accounted for in terms of cultural differences in Indonesia. For one thing, the camera point of view throughout most of the sequence is the same as that of the crowd, and in the film this is predominantly male though not exclusively so; and in actual social situations, for example in Bali, the gender of the spectators would most frequently be mixed. Additionally, in Mulvey's terms a patriarchal narrative dimension is to be found in the scene of the dance, because Nji Sari's future husband, Dadang (who later undergoes a series of tests in his wooing of Nji Sari), is sometimes glimpsed in the background of shots of the crowd, the camera cutting twice to register his presence from Nji Sari and Ohim's point of view. However, Dadang clearly accepts that the dance has its rules and that he should not interfere.

An examination of other dance sequences in the film bears out these arguments about the simultaneously stimulating, and yet controlled and refined mode of address of these dances, and the key role of the woman in signifying the need for control. In addition to the main dance, there is a long social dance (*tayuban*) in which all the *ronggeng* dancers dance with village men. Ohim enters the dance and through his persistent attention virtually forces Nji Sari to dance with him, conversing with her while he does so, and beginning the conversation by telling her he had seen Dadang with her when she was bathing. This long sequence, lasting almost 10 minutes, is filmed in a manner not unreminiscent of Antonioni, because for a significant part of the dance, within the wide-

screen (actually cinemascope) two-shot, Nji Sari is filmed facing away from Ohim, seeking to avert her gaze from his, which is trying to dominate her as she dances with him. At the same time, in her conversation, she herself seeks to challenge, humour and gently ridicule his attitudes, even using her body to inflame him—by dancing away from him in a particularly expressive way, at the same time as she represses him verbally. Here we should also note that when Nji Sari does this, she is not simply behaving according to a set of rules, but is expressing her own lack of desire for Ohim, and her preference for Dadang. She is behaving as an individual, but the *ronggeng* dance itself, as spectacle, also provides a set of rules.

The dance Nji Sari performs in the credit sequence is also interesting due to the way narrative themes are prefigured via this dance. Nji Sari enters before an assembled gathering of dignitaries and gracefully genuflects in the direction of the camera (she is facing away from the gathering), performing a *mudra*, in which she joins her hands before her face, and moves her head from side to side, as though invoking a goddess, whom, shaman-like, she seems in this dance to represent. Although the narrative has not yet commenced—and the characters have not been introduced, and the credit titles continue to be superimposed—her dance is intercut with a shot of the sub-district head and Ohim looking at her, and smiling and conversing about her, with ribald, lewd and knowing smiles. Later, as the sequence continues, there is a shot of Ohim staring at her with a kind of fixed desire. It is at this point, as the camera cuts back to Nji Sari, after Ohim's look of intent, that her dance changes from being primarily an erotic, sensuous dance, to being a warrior dance. Here the defensive hand and arm movements begin, and she subsequently juggles with two large swords. We therefore have encapsulated in this dance simultaneously: (1) the theme of the narrative (excessive and unreciprocated desire leading to an attempt on the part of the male to control the woman); (2) the insertion of a threatening male gaze structure; and (3) the structure of the dance as a structure of stimulation, control and, if necessary, defence. Equally important, however, is the way in which many aspects of this dance establish the figure of the woman as having sacred significance, while the male figures respond to this transpersonal, archetypal figure, only in terms of their own personal momentary desire, cheapened by the disrespect in which they hold her, clearly marked by the film in this pre-credit sequence. It should be noted as well that through-

out this sequence, while there are shots in which these two men are seen gazing at Nji Sari, the camera is never identified with their position. They face the camera from among the audience—and the camera is placed at the back of the stage, the area Nji Sari addresses at the beginning of the film, as she kneels and bows, reminding us of the originally sacred role of this kind of dance performance. At this point we should remember that the *ronggeng*, *tayuban* and *joget* dances are believed to have their origins in religious ceremonies and harvest festival celebrations, and go back to the Hindu-Buddhist period in Indonesia. Some of the imagery associated with them is found as engravings on temple walls in Java, as for example the warrior figure that Nji Sari emulates in the credit sequence in the film.[53] The collective nature of the body language and the suggestions of a touch culture are also found in this 1000-year-old imagery, as discussed in Chap. 6.

In the foregoing discussion we have examined the way in which the *ronggeng* dance in the film *Nji Ronggeng* provides a quite new and illuminating paradigm with which Western film theory can consider the issue of eroticism within spectacle: one in which erotic spectacle is interactive, involves the man in the spectacle, makes it a rule-governed activity in which the man's performance is subject to examination, and in which, overall, eroticism is stimulated and heightened, but controlled and acculturated. These characteristics are not only true of the dance created for the film, but can be found in other dances in Indonesia, for example in the Balinese *joget*. The film shows that, in some instances, new directions can be provided for Western society by texts from countries such as Indonesia, not because these texts are avant-garde or postmodernist, but because they confront us with structures which are very old, which have evolved over a long period of time—possibly originating in Hindu-Buddhist times, but surviving and developing under Islam—structures and possibilities which Western civilization has either forgotten, or never discovered for itself. Despite the difficulties under which they work, it is clear that many Indonesian filmmakers recognize the values of these structures and, on occasion, succeed in incorporating them in their films.

[53]For imagery of this kind dating from tenth-century Java, see 'Plate 102. Female Dancer with Sword and Shield, Ramayana Relief, Prambanan', in Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia*, 120.

The Mother's Role in Creating Body Language: Some Questions

Here I wish to raise a number of theoretical questions, to which I can only give limited answers, but they are questions that should not be avoided. What is the origin of the group body language, and the concomitant touch culture, that I described and exemplified in films discussed in earlier chapters? In what ways can we account for the aetiology of these phenomena? How might we identify any role that women play in their creation? Is there is any connection between the phenomena of group identity and touch culture, discussed in my earlier chapters, and the phenomena outlined in this chapter, where, in both *Nji Ronggeng* and *Sangkuriang*, women are accorded an agency not commonly found in patriarchal cinema, and where, in *Sangkuriang*, the mother not only gives birth to her biological son, but it is also implied that ultimately, in some crucial ways, she culturally shapes him.

Questions of aetiology have frequently been raised in discussions of the cinema since the early 1970s, in the form of discussions of the social construction of the subject. Answers in the form of Freudian and Lacanian theory have formed a major part of film theory over the last 40 years. As film theorist Kaja Silverman explains, most psychoanalysts see identity as formed through a process of internalization: 'Identity, as psychoanalysis has taught us, necessitates the internalization of a series of things which are in the first instance external.'[54] Freud sees this occurring both in the formation of the ego and superego, defining the ego as 'the psychic mapping of what is initially a bodily image', and the superego as 'the introjection of parental authority, in the guise, for instance, of the father's voice'.[55] The post-Freudian, Melanie Klein, who developed methods for the psychoanalysis of children, sees ego formation as

[54] Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 126.

[55] Silverman, ibid. Freud insists that 'The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface', adding in a footnote that 'the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body, it may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus'. Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 19, translated under the General Editorship of James Strachey, London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1978, 26.

resulting from the internalization of the image of the mother's breast as a good object producing a strong and whole ego, though the ego can be split or fragmented by the internalization of bad objects, such as 'phantasies' (Klein's term) of the mother's breast as devouring or bad.[56] As Silverman explains, Lacan's discussion of 'The Mirror Stage in the Formation of the I' also emphasizes an exteriority, which is taken within the subject:

> first in the guise of its mirror image, subsequently in the form of parental imagoes, and later yet in the shape of a whole range of cultural representations, the *moi* becoming over time more and more explicitly dependent upon that which might be said to be 'alien' or 'other.' [57]

But fundamental to Lacan's position is the statement that 'What determines [the subject], at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside.'[58] Once again I would reiterate that the emphasis in Lacan on vision and interconnected looks is why his work has been so fulsomely adopted by film theorists.

Here, however, in raising questions specifically about the representation of women in Indonesian cinema, I wish to use not psychoanalytic theory, but the observations of anthropologists exploring childrearing in Indonesian regional societies. I refer to research that is relevant to what may be regarded as an element of the social construction of Javanese and Balinese subjects, descriptions of methods of childrearing in Javanese and Balinese society, given by anthropologists as a result of observation, and by Javanese interviewees. Here, as in Freud and Klein, there is some implication of the importance of processes of internalization. But there is not such an emphasis on vision, as in Lacan, for instance. The emphasis among anthropologists writing about Java and Bali is rather on touch. In both Java and Bali the infant and young child is carried in a long sling (known as a *selendang*) on the mother's body—throughout the day, both within the house and even in external social situations, such as in the street when the mother is shopping at a market—until it can walk. This

[56] Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude, and Other Works, 1946–1963*, New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1957, 5–6 and 25–6.

[57] Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 127.

[58] Ibid., 128.

means that the child has physical contact with the mother not only when she is specifically attending to it, but also when she is attending to other matters. The practice has been described in detail by Hildred Geertz.[59] We might draw the conclusion that a touch culture body language is then developed in a series of stages: initially the child is in relatively constant physical contact with the mother, or, on occasion, with the father and other siblings, who will substitute for the mother and also carry it in a *selendang* as they move about, both within the family and in social circles. We should remember, as well, that they are already themselves imbricated within the body language of a touch culture, with particular ways of sensing touch. Here one might suggest that so constant is the dynamic and changing environment of physical contact, that this too is internalized, as a relation to physical contact (holding, touching, stroking)—not just vision and seeing via the internalization of the mother's gaze—resulting in the development of many kinds of sensory pathways within the brain and the nervous and muscular system, and, ultimately, a set of social expectations, skills and potentials (*habitus*), creating a different sensory world from that within cultures where these methods of both nursing and socializing the baby are not practised. But one might surmise that what is created is not only a different sensory world, but sets of neural pathways for different kinds of social connectedness and awareness. Note that while the description here is of how certain potentials connected with identity are created in childhood, it is not strongly dependent on psychoanalysis (for it is not a description of the psyche), but is a description of the formation of a social habitus, a way of inhabiting the body that is consonant with—indeed shares—the potentialities for feeling of a community.[60]

There are other details about childrearing in both Java and Bali that suggest that in these societies and cultures there are many beliefs and practices testifying to the view that the acculturation of the body of

[59] Geertz, *The Javanese Family*, 92–105. The *selendang* is discussed on page 94.

[60] Archaeologist Timothy Taylor has claimed that the invention of the baby sling, more than 2 million years ago, facilitated the growth in size of the human brain, because the baby sling, artificially lengthened human gestation. See Timothy Taylor, *The Artificial Ape: How Technology Changed the Course of Human Evolution*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, Chapter 5: 'The Smart Bi-Ped Paradox'.

the newly born child into the proper *habitus* (the *habitus* of the culture) is not something that can be simply left to chance. Hildred Geertz writes at some length about the care taken in Java to ensure that the child is given not only affection, care and emotional warmth but also an immense respect from its earliest moments. In Java there is also a striking emphasis on the need to avoid the child being jarred or startled in any way, particularly in its earliest months of life, in case this interferes with the development of a sense of balance and poise. Regarding Bali, Bateson and Mead report that the Balinese parent at times treats the child with the respect accorded to a god. And while the infant is treated with great gentleness, there are instances where the infant is handled with deliberate, cultivated friendly roughness.[61] On both islands, all families celebrate for their child not just a single christening and subsequent annual birthdays, as occurs in Christian countries, but numerous formal rituals, involving social gatherings, regularly recognizing and celebrating at short intervals the infant and the child entering a new and different phase of its development.

These sorts of insights are relevant to understanding how a body language of a touch culture, described in my account of the film *November 1828* and also with examples from other films such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* and *Roro Mendut* (and the painting by Raden Saleh), is generated as a key element of the habitus that the child comes quickly to assume, as seen also in the photographs taken by Bateson and Mead. The relation of this to ideas of control, self-control and the inculcation of balance and self-control, stemming from the earliest moments in life, can be seen in *Nji Ronggeng*, which is also a film about group interaction and individual responsibility in a community conceived in group terms. Indeed, it might be suggested that the idea of a core relationship of balance to the mother—shortly afterwards to be destabilized by Sangkuriang's desire for her—is found in the shot of Sumbi and Sona together, as a regal pair, in a state of both closeness and detachment, shortly after Sona decides to relate more intensely to his newly found friend, Larasati, who is in fact his mother, Sumbi.

[61] For the discussion of the child as a god, see Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, 144–5. For discussions of friendly roughness, see ibid., 180–5.

Complicating Anthropological Generalizations: *Dibalik Kelambu* (1982)

In the previous section I raised questions about the aetiology of touch cultures, which I had also, earlier, described as group oriented rather than individualistic, examining this in a framework of anthropological discussions of childrearing practices. In this section I wish to place limits on what might appear to be claims I might be making about the position of women in Javanese societies, particularly their power, by now discussing a film that partly supports some generalizations in anthropology and partly confounds them.

Dibalik Kelambu ('Behind the Mosquito Net', 1982) is a naturalistic family drama about a middle-class, Javanese extended family living together in the same house in Jakarta. The film was written and directed by leading director Teguh Karya, and made with key stars from his Teater Populer Collective, Christine Hakim and Slamet Rahardjo. The film, which won numerous awards at the Indonesian Film Festival in 1983, has been described by one Indonesian critic as of exceptional sociological relevance to the Indonesian family.[62] For this reason I wish to use it to explore ways in which aspects of cultural specificity identified by anthropologists might be found within a feature film, but also the extent to which dramatized situations pose complications for broadly accepted generalizations made about families by anthropologists. The film describes a crisis within the marital situation of two young people in their late twenties, the married couple Hasan and Nurlela (Lela), who have two young children, and live in the large old house of the parent of one of them, due to financial need. The film is also a significant point of discussion, for it is the only film among the four discussed here which deals with a marital situation.

First, the film fulfils the broad generalization that, unlike in India or China, which are regarded as patrilocal societies, where a young couple commonly lives with the family of the husband, in this film Hasan and Lela live with the family of the wife, thus exemplifying the generalization made by historians and by Hildred Geertz that in South East Asia, and particu-

[62] Hikmat Darmawan, 'Film Indonesia, Suatu Ketika (Bagian Pertama): Sebuah Sosiologi yang Hilang', https://laununakerinci.wordpress.com/2009/03/10/film-indonesia-suatu-ketika-bagian-pertama/, accessed 1 May 2016.

larly in Java, such living arrangements tend to be matrilocal.[63] Living in the house together are Bachrum, an amiable but often irascible father, his daughter Lela and her husband, Hasan, and their two very young children, Fitri and Rizki, together with an elder daughter of Bachrum, Rosnah, and a younger late-teenage son, Ismed. The crisis arises due to Hasan's inability to tolerate any longer the criticisms that his father-in-law makes of him. Hasan is from a poorer family, and he works in quite a responsible but not very well-paid position as a controller in a nearly Jakarta bus station, with loyalties and responsibilities to his staff. In particular he feels inferior in status to another brother-in-law, Bakri, who is married to the eldest daughter of the family, Ida, and who owns a factory, travels overseas a lot, and lives in a large modern house in a high-class area of Jakarta, but who often comes to visit Bachrum's family, and who, together with his wife, is close to the family. More grievously, Hasan eventually comes to lose any sense of self-esteem, due to the constant nagging and criticisms of his father-in-law, Bachrum. The film succeeds in creating a complex sense of what it is like to live in this house, with different small dramas going on simultaneously in different parts of the house, and spilling over into each other.

In Indian cinema, patrilocal arrangements whereby young couples live with the parents of the husband, and the wife is placed under pressures she never experienced with her own parents, have been subject to critique in a number of well-known films, for example in Satyajit Ray's film *Devi* ('The Goddess', 1960).[64] In *Dibalik Kelambu* we find that matrilocal living arrangements, while possibly advantaging the woman who is not subject to monitoring and assessment by members of the husband's

[63] For discussion of matrilocal residence preference in South East Asia and Java, see Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 227–8 and Geertz *The Javanese Family*, 45. The term used by Geertz here is 'matrifocality', and includes a predisposition for matrilocal residence.

[64] See the discussion of the position of the young bride in the home of the husband's extended family household (known as the 'Sasur Bari') in Manisha Roy, *Bengali Women*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975, 13 and 149–72. Roy argues that in the Sasur Bari there is often a concern lest the young woman become more of a wife and less of a daughter-in-law. There are further reflections on this phenomenon in Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981, 73–6. Kakar also includes an extended discussion of specific child-drearing practices customary in such households, including socialization in gender roles at different phases of childhood (ibid., 79–91).

family, can bring its own complications, which have an effect on the husband, particularly if it has consequences for the husband's Javanese sense of self-esteem, and that these negative consequences for the husband in turn impact on the wife. Nevertheless, the film is by no means criticizing matrilocality, but is showing how difficult it can be for a family to live together, even in arrangements that are commonly found in situations of economic necessity and are culturally sanctioned. In the film the wife, Lela, is presented as mildly depressed, frequently visiting the doctor to get tranquillizers, and relying more than one would expect on the help of her sister, Rosnah, to look after her two children. In order to avoid his father-in-law, the husband, Hasan, starts to stay away from home in the evenings, spending time at the tiny home of his work colleague, Basuki, and his family. After being sharply criticized by Bachrum when it is discovered that he has resigned from his job and become just an 'ordinary' taxi driver, Hasan starts to develop an interest in a young neighbour of Basuki, Martini, who is an attractive and wise young woman who is separated from her husband, who has taken another wife.

It might be thought that the ease with which Hasan talks himself into seeing the relationship with Martini as a viable possible relationship, is related to the ease of divorce within Javanese society and the claim that it is not uncommon for Javanese men to accumulate a number of wives. Nevertheless, the film presents the marriage between Lela and Hasan as a marriage based on love, and shows the wife tolerating much apparent disloyalty in her husband, and working quietly to try to find some solution to the divisive situation confronting the family within the extended family home. Within the family there is no obvious mediator, because Bachrum assumes that everything he says and does is correct, and that he has the right to upbraid anyone who infringes his sense of propriety.

Here we see that statements by anthropologists, commencing with Hildred Geertz in the early 1960s, that the most prominent woman in the Javanese home, the mother, has autonomy and power and is responsible for most of the decisions, is not supported nor evidenced by the film. This is because the mother of this family appears to be dead; there is no reference made to her at any point in the film (which raises the question of who does have power in the Javanese family if the mother is no longer there). It should be pointed out that Geertz's conclusions need not necessarily be exemplified by the film, for her work and her arguments were developed in the context of traditional village families, and not in an urban environment. But we may still ask the question, even though there is no mother

present, and the film is set in a modern urban environment, what power and authority is present in this family? Is it vested in the father or in the daughters? And what kind of authority is one talking about? The father certainly dominates the family, because he monitors situations if he wants to and intrudes on them to express his opinion. He also expects his needs to be catered for, and for people to jump to attention in sorting them out, being criticized in turn if they don't satisfy him. But this does not mean that he has authority. Rather, it is clear in the film that the father exercises power but it is not always authoritative power, that it disrupts and disturbs the family, and that most family members, particularly the women, are involved in coping with the father and the way that he exercises power. While the father assumes authority and is by no means always wrong in his opinions, the impression given is that he is regarded as self-indulgent in his intrusiveness, and verging on senility.

Nevertheless, the males seem to think that they have certain rights. The most dramatic confrontation in the film occurs when Lela tells Hasan that she has obtained money they could use to rent a house and so move out from the extended family home. Hasan becomes furious, simply because she has money he does not expect her to have, Hasan even accusing her of having engaged in prostitution to get the money, as though he has an assumption that if a woman has money then she must have 'fallen' in some way. But, in reality, Lela has carefully hidden the fact that her wealthy brother-in-law, Bakri, has really loaned her the money in response to her request, for she knows that Hasan—for reasons of vanity—has already refused to accept money from Bakri. This scene culminates in Hasan striking Lela on the face, as though she deserves this sort of reaction and he has the authority to behave in this way. He also breaks a glass door, cutting his hand as he does so, before leaving the house in self-righteous rage. This incident results in other members of the extended family, including Bakri and Ida, and a doctor relative seen occasionally in the film, arriving quickly at the house, in an attempt to work out how they can find a solution to a situation which has now become critical.

We see here that the central female protagonist, the wife and daughter, Lela, does not have overt power in the family, for she rarely dominates spaces or exercises authority over the actions of others, and her power is limited. Rosnah, the elder sister, seems to have less power again, spending much of her time caring for her younger sister's children or responding to the requests of her father. While she is not a major character, some characters draw attention to her plight, the father at one point remon-

strating with Hasan over the amount of domestic work and responsibility devolving on Rosnah as a result of his (Hasan's) absences from the home, and that this neglect of his children shows a lack of care not only for his children, but also for Rosnah's rights. The eldest sister, Ida, at one point, says to Rosnah that she should think of marrying. However, ultimately, although it is not explained in the film, the older women seem to hold the financial cards, or the power of making decisions about finances, Ida saying to Rosnah over lunch at a restaurant that if Hasan and Lela rent a house and move out, then the father can be brought to live in Ida's modern home, and the big old house sold. Clearly there are changing power relationships. Even if the father has exercised power considerably in this family, in the course of time his power is waning.

The portrait of Lela shows her exercising power in ways that are the opposite of Hasan. Hasan expects Lela to tell the truth all the time, even though he himself is involved in quite extensive deception, not only developing an interest in Martini in ways he himself does not even confront, but in hiding from the family that he has lost his job and is now working as a taxi driver. But Lela has found out that Hasan now no longer works at the bus depot, for she has gone there to see him and staff there are not able to hide his absence there from her. However she does not confront Hasan on this matter. When Hasan learns, from Basuki his former colleague, that Lela knows he has had a conflict with his manager at work and resigned, he confronts Lela about the fact that she has known this for some time, and even then she denies it, only admitting the truth after she has told him that he also frequently lies. Her response is to say that she was not interested in confronting him, but only in trying to find a way to solve his problems. Lela's sustained assiduous loyalty to her cause only falters when she comes to believe that Hasan is in fact in the process of taking Martini as a second wife, and so betraying her. At this point she theatrically attempts to swallow an overdose of sleeping pills, thus attracting support from her sister, Rosnah, and from her father. The women therefore have power because they are forgiving of their partners, are circumspect in their behaviour and assiduous in their coping mechanisms.

The film concludes with a note of humour, in keeping with its overall project of seeing reconciliation between the couple occur. Lela has gone out and provisionally contracted a house to rent with the money provided by Bakri, and has also found a job at a travel agency, thus giving her some financial autonomy. But Hasan also, in the company of Martini, has been searching for a house and agreed to contract one. The film never clari-

fies the issue of whether Hasan had contracted the house in order to live there with Martini, who would then move out from her mother's house, or whether he contracted it to bring Lela and his children there. Indeed the film suggests that Hasan may himself not be clear on the answer to this question. Now that Hasan has returned to Lela—for Martini does not think it right that they should become partners—Hasan and Lela have an abundance of houses. The film ends with them trying to decide theoretically, in their bedroom in the middle of the night, in which house they should live.

Two characters in the film (the father and the brother-in-law) make the statement to Hasan on different occasions, that 'when you married Nurlela, you did not just marry an individual, you took on a family, you entered her circle'. In this subtle psychological study of individuals within a group culture, while it is difficult to fully specify all the ways that power operates interpersonally between individuals in the film, the above statement affirms that group life cannot be avoided, and emphasizes that this brings with it obligations and responsibilities.

Sawdust and Tinsel (1953): Power Relations in Relationships

So far in this discussion I have given a number of examples of films made in Indonesia that do something rather different from what has been discussed in feminist film theory as the dominant modes for the representation of women. Here I wish to broaden the discussion to consider issues of power relations between individual men and women who are in relationships, by considering some aspects not of an Indonesian film, but of a Western film dealing with relations between a couple in a group context. The film I will discuss at this point is Ingmar Bergman's 1953 film set in a circus, *Glyckarnas Afton*, most commonly known internationally as *Sawdust and Tinsel*. While there are moments of erotic gazing by some characters in this film, and perhaps even attempts to control through the gaze, the film is primarily a portrait of changing balances and imbalances of power in relations of a couple in an ongoing if somewhat vexed *de facto* relationship. The question of how power circulates not only between the couple, but within the group of people working in the circus, is also an issue of great interest in this film, and one that lucidly opens up some more varied and flexible concepts of how power operates both between individuals and within a group situation.

Sawdust and Tinsel opens on a cold and bleak dawn, as the caravans of the 'Alberti Circus' arrive in a small coastal Swedish town where the troupe is to give a series of performances. Albert is established early in the film as the owner-manager of this small enterprise. While Albert is ultimately dominant because he is the owner-manager of the circus, there are a number of points to be made about this central male protagonist in the film. Albert is in a state of struggle with his young partner, Anne, in a way that has elements of a contest of power. He has to attend to her demands and satisfy them, and he can expect to be confronted by her regularly, even while she has affection for him. In that sense there is a power struggle going on which is never fully resolved in any final way. When, on arriving in this new town where they will perform, Albert visits his first wife, who has opened a business and has custody of their two young sons, this is seen as so threatening by Anne that she visits the local provincial theatre and tests out the interest that the actor Frans has shown in her, earlier on. A power struggle ensues with Frans, but there is already a power struggle going on with Albert. Albert is also in a state of struggle with the conditions of his own life—he is finding life in the circus, with its poverty and financial uncertainty, its rare successes, and its tough, bleak living conditions, almost unsustainable. Here the writings of Kaja Silverman on male subjectivity, and in particular the ways in which a 'male subject's aspirations to mastery and sufficiency are undermined from many directions', are extremely useful.[65] Albert displays that masochism of which Silverman speaks—he is a forceful blunt man but also very good at showing his vulnerability (it's a wonderful performance by Swedish actor, Ake Fridell). The idea of struggle, even to be a man who is effective, and of male masochism as a major element in the story, are dramatically symbolized in a powerful and quite lengthy scene that acts as a preface to the film, which tells in a surreal, almost dreamlike flashback, of how, on a hot summer's day, Alma, the wife of the clown Frost, went swimming naked with soldiers involved in firing practice, and how Frost, witnessed by a unit of soldiers and all the circus folk, believing his honour to be at stake,

[65] Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 52. Silverman's project is one of exploring alternative or 'deviant' masculinities, deviant in the sense that their defining desires and identifications are not generally acceptable under patriarchy. Silverman sees her work as also having implications for notions of 'femininity', in that the kinds of masculinities she explores are conventionally regarded as occupying a psychic space that is regarded as feminine.

brought her out of the water and physically carried her up a stony hill, eventually collapsing, and being carried back to the tents literally foaming at the mouth.

The narrative structure of *Sawdust and Tinsel* might be briefly contrasted with one paradigm of the hero narrative, as identified by Elsaesser and Buckland, where in the narrative the hero must confront certain obstacles and so demonstrate that he has the powers to take on the role of the masculine leader. Theoretically this is conceived as a process of undergoing cultural initiation, a story of achieving a normative identity ('What does it mean to be/come a man?'), the hero narrative film concluding, usually, with the formation of a heterosexual couple.[66] But in the film *Sawdust and Tinsel* there is no simple trajectory and no final conclusion, but a constant state of struggle, and the central male in the film, Albert, the owner-manager and ringmaster of the itinerant Alberti Circus, is not a patriarchal hero so much as a survivor, part oppressor and part facilitator.

While the parallel couple, Frost and Alma, symbolize the extremes of humiliation which potentially threaten Albert and Anne, one comes to see that Albert's strength is his recognition that one of his primary roles, as leader of the circus, is to inject morale and spirit into his troupe, and in this way to keep it going and so provide a liveable framework for all of those working with him and subject to similar conditions. This task is not so much a matter of power, but of contesting the economic and spiritual privation in which they all live. One also notes that in the course of the film both Frost and Alma's daily lives are not as traumatic as their experience on the seashore when Alma bathed with soldiers on manoeuvres, and that they both have their good qualities, and have, moreover, reached some accommodation and show mutual kindness towards each other.

I have discussed this issue of power, and power struggles between husband and wife (and between potential lovers) as it is exemplified in *Sawdust and Tinsel*, because it provides an alternative to the overemphasis on notions of control associated with the look and the gaze in film theory, and raises the issue of agency, and how agency operates in ways not so

[66]This definition of one model of a 'founding' narrative found in most mainstream American cinema, 'the male hero's transformation into a man', is given by Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland in their chapter on 'Oedipal Narratives and the Post-Oedipal', in *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis*, New York, Arnold, 2002, 223.

commonly discussed in film theory. This does not mean that looks and 'controlling gazes' do not figure in *Sawdust and Tinsel*. They are very much part of the actor Frans' repertoire in his attempts to seduce Anne. But other kinds of power, and of limits to the man's power, are present in the film and are more important. Note, as well, that in terms of Albert's patriarchal role, where I suggested that he was responsible for morale, this is a much more flexible notion of power than that suggested by notions of controlling gazes and of male discourses emanating from the hero that govern the narrative. Morale is something that is communicated by example and is then shared and becomes a facilitating factor that others, including women characters (such as Alma and Anne) can not only participate in but also impart or, indeed, at times play a leadership role by initiating it for themselves. The film thematizes the importance of morale, and of leadership providing morale to make difficult lives and situations sustainable, by at least twice showing scenes in which Albert moves out of a state of despondency (which he more than the others externalizes in the film) and comes to grips with the fact that he must make life sustainable not only for himself but for the others. The concept of morale is not a top-down or linear notion of agency, but of a facilitating ethos, relevant to the situation at hand. In *Sawdust and Tinsel* morale operates in the context of a group (of circus people). Morale is something that individuals need. But if an individual is in a group context, s/he shares in or may even initiate morale, whether s/he is in a position of leadership or not.

While I have spoken of Albert in terms of the way he focuses the issue of the morale of the circus, he is still an ambiguous figure. Albert recovers his morale at the end of the film, after he shoots the bear, to the grief and horror of Alma, for whom this female bear (named Dorothy) is a friend. So Albert eliminates his own internal bad objects (to borrow a phrase from Melanie Klein) through vicarious and nihilistic aggression. And Alma has significantly contributed to morale herself in some of the circus meetings, having made unexpectedly positive and thoughtful contributions at these meetings, however bawdy and crazy, if generous, she is in scenes early in the film. The notion of morale, as a galvanizing emotion within a group, is related to thought and perception, because morale is generated by the communication of thoughts and perceptions (that is, by a positive and constructive imagining of possibilities within situations), and is itself an excellent model for thinking about how an individual is both a member of a group and an individual within that group (to whom an attitude may be communicated, or who may themselves communicate an attitude or an

ethos). The scenes of the meetings of the circus members, where Albert is at the centre, working through his depression, are excellent examples of this.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the Indonesian films discussed above for their body language and interest in depicting groups, in *Sawdust and Tinsel*, while there is camaraderie and solidarity at times, what we have represented in the film is basically an institutionalized group identity in a society of individuals. Morale is something that operates in both institutionalized groups and in what I have characterized earlier as non-institutionalized groups. The Indonesian film *Nji Ronggeng* is also a film about the lives of itinerant performers working in a travelling sideshow, wherein everyone is grappling with change on a daily basis. The drama in *Sawdust and Tinsel* is played in a schismogenic way (to deploy again Bateson's term), with characters involved at times in sequences of quite dramatic reciprocal increasing mounting conflict, eventually exhausting their capacity to go on generating this conflict. However, in *Nji Ronggeng* there is an explicit emphasis—in the face of conflict—on conflict reduction as a primary value.

To return again to the central issue of power relations in relationships, I want to reiterate how the issue of control is something that permeates the dynamic of relations between all the characters in *Sawdust and Tinsel*, and is not limited to characters who gaze. Indeed, gazing is seen as the activity of the seducer, who at most wants only a temporary sexual encounter with the woman, to add her to his list of women whose eye he has caught, and perhaps also to have power over her by laying her once. Characteristically, this is the underlying attitude and form of posturing of a gazing male protagonist in *film noir*, whether detective or criminal, and whether he really wants the woman at all. Of course, discussion of the gaze in studies of films has primarily been about the relation between the look of a character and the camera look, and hence the related audience look and point of identification. Nevertheless, this has frequently been related to notions of social control. But in *Sawdust and Tinsel* there is no single situation of power but a changing power dynamic, which is ultimately dependent for a successful outcome on the ability to satisfy and cherish and sustain relationships through the creation of morale between individuals. This also extends to the film's portrait of the group dynamic of the circus. Here the most important thing is for the leader to sustain the morale of the group, which is also a matter of the group, or individuals in the group, being able to generate morale when it is needed. Morale is a non-coercive form

of creating an atmosphere in which people want to work together in a cooperative and mutually advantageous way, and is an important alternative model for conceiving how power operates, in addition to the more popular (in academic circles) model of Bentham's Panopticon, to which Foucault drew attention, wherein the individual, already imprisoned, is subject to the gaze of surveillance. Power, democracy and reciprocity are all important notions for any Indonesian group context, and so also is the notion of morale. As the Indonesian director Teguh Karya would often remark, 'Harus melestarikan perasaaan yang baik antara kita': that is, one needs to maintain an atmosphere of good feeling between us all.[67]

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has addressed not so much the negative depictions of women in Indonesian cinema, many of which have been persuasively identified and critiqued by authors such as Krishna Sen, Saraswati Sunindyo and Siti Aripurnami, but has raised questions of the representation of women in ways that might escape or transcend the stereotypes perpetrated by male directors globally, or which might have some cultural specificity about them, particularly pertaining to the possibility that, historically, women in Indonesia have been more empowered and autonomous than in other global regions, and to the fact that, broadly speaking, Indonesia is a group-oriented society with a touch culture body language. Here I have provided some key examples. In *Suci Sang Primadona* the woman regains sovereignty over her own image by performing in song aspects of her own life in a way that openly challenges those who would disrespect her and use her. Not only is her image not controlled by the men, but close-ups of them gazing at her show these men broken or vanquished by this performance of the truth. While it may conceivably be argued that this simply replays an image of the mother as both goddess and whore, creating an archetype that overpowers the men, particularly those involved with her, nevertheless the power relations discussed in Mulvey are reversed: it is the men who are investigated not the woman, and Suci is not seen as a whore in any essential way in the film, but as someone forced to practise a craft. In *Sangkuriang*, it is the mother (Sumbi), not the father or his substitute,

[67] Teguh Karya, personal communication to the author, January 1987.

who enacts the prohibition on incest, and curbs the *nafsu* (passion) of her son for her. Even while preserving her affection for him, and his for her—so that no ultimate rupture occurs in the family relationship, nor does anyone commit suicide—the mother withdraws in a way that makes incest impossible. Here we have a legend that, like *Oedipus Rex*, takes incest as its subject, but the story presents a quite different picture from what we find in the Sophocles play. The desired incest does not occur because the desire displayed by the male is repressed by the mother. It is therefore a legend that correlates with ideas of women's power and status put forward initially by Hildred Geertz, and reconfirmed and further elaborated by Suzanne Brenner, to the effect that in Java, women in rural families traditionally have authority, for they are regarded as more capable of self-control than men, indeed their role is to control the *nafsu* of their men. Both Geertz and Brenner's research, and possibly some aspects of its conceptualization, have some similarity with earlier research conducted by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, who discuss the non-schismogenic nature of Balinese life, whereby feeling states of anger, dependency or jealousy, leading to climax, are discouraged and trained out, not only through the institutions regulating group village life, but in certain practices in childrearing wherein infants are stimulated to produce reactions which are then ignored.[68] The preoccupation with control and self-control is found very markedly, in a group context, in the film *Nji Ronggeng*, where the *ronggeng* dance is a form of socialization of the group, and particularly of the relations of men to women, also enacted regularly in the Balinese *joget* dance. In *Nji Ronggeng*, the paying male partner who emerges from the group of spectators is stimulated by the female dancer, but must learn self-control in the eyes of the spectators. The discussion of these three films led to some speculation about how the group body language of a touch culture was created and perpetuated, and the role of the woman in reproducing this. Nevertheless, despite the attractiveness of some of the formulations by anthropologists and the way they can be exemplified in some feature films, in my discussion of *Dibalik Kelambu* I showed that actual family situations, when dramatized on film, can be quite complex,

[68] Brenner, 'Why Women Rule the Roost', 23–4 and passim; Geertz, *The Javanese Family*, 122–3; Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, 148–63 (Plates 47–54).

and there is a tension between underlying cultural formations, individual psychological characteristics and the exigencies of particular locations and emerging situations.

In my last section I took as an example a Swedish film, Bergman's *Sawdust and Tinsel*, as a way of broadening the issue of control away from notions of control via the gaze, and the objectification of the woman, to the issue of balance and imbalances in power relations between individuals and in relation to the self. Here, as well, it was possible to examine the issue of power within a group as well as between individuals in a group, although in contrast to situations in the Indonesian films discussed in this chapter, what we have in the circus in *Sawdust and Tinsel* is an example of an institutionalized group (the people come together as a result of their employment) rather than there being a more spontaneous group formation related to a group body language. Here I commented on the way in which power in the film was related not to gazing nor to institutional control, but by the way morale was communicated. I suggested that the morale of a group, communicated rationally through sharing perceptions as well as emotions, was a flexible way of conceiving of power, less related to coercion or surveillance, and one way in which an individual could be both an individual and a member of a group without losing individual identity, and that this applied to the dynamics of both a Western institutionalized group as in the circus in the Swedish film, and a group in which there flowed tendencies of spontaneous group formation, as found at some moments in Indonesian films.

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Conclusion: 'Placing Culture'

This book has explored the way Indonesian films have engaged with issues of traditional cultures in diverse regions, the forms these regional societies take, and particularly the cultural phenomena to which they give rise. It has also explored the issue of broad cultural dominants in Indonesian society, in particular group orientation and group body language, which are also addressed by Heider in his book *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, though in quite different ways. At the same time, this study has eschewed attempting to define a national culture or a national identity, on the ground that most of the cultural dominants with which it has engaged, and especially body language, are pre-national in origin, and not only pertain to local communities in which the individual is raised, but are part of the *habitus* of an individual. Nevertheless, the arguments and analyses presented in this book are grounds for thinking further about the differences between individualistic Western societies and group-oriented societies, certainly beyond bland and non-specific generalizations, because the phenomena explored are fundamental to the constitution and forms of interaction of an individual, ultimately producing a quite different kind of human experience. This is something demonstrated by the films themselves. At the same time, in Chap. 7 I have provocatively raised questions about alternative positioning(s) of women in some Indonesian films. One of the examples investigated—the West Javanese legend of 'incest avoided' with the help of the mother, a story found also in various forms elsewhere in Indonesia, and retold in the popular film *Sangkuriang*—provides an alternative myth to the Oedipus story, used widely in the West as a singular

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theoretical model for the development of the superego and the foundations of culture.

Of course 'culture', or 'cultures', are not the only phenomena addressed by Indonesian films, even by the best films. For example, take the films made early in the independence period—by Usmar Ismail and the group around him—about the period of struggle for independence, films which were influenced by neo-realism as a mode of production, but do quite different things from the Italian neo-realist films. For one thing, they engage with issues of war crimes perpetrated against the local population even by Indonesian freedom fighters opposing the Dutch. So these films are not primarily concerned with issues of culture. Rather they are concerned with moral issues, though, like the Italian neo-realist films they do encapsulate a sense of the ethos of a particular period, an ethos both grim and hopeful, imbued with human courage, but also with austerity, bleakness and, at times, betrayal. Nevertheless, these films do not pose objections to the main arguments of this book; it is simply that cultural issues are not foregrounded. Similarly, there are a number of fine Indonesian films that engage with inescapable Third World dimensions of Indonesian society, an issue pointed to in my second chapter, when I cited statistics of 10 % literacy at the time of the ending of colonialism, and the fact that even today 11 % of the population are under the poverty line of $1.25 dollars a day, but that if one raises the poverty line to $2 per day, up to 40 % of the population are below the poverty line. The Indonesian films that engage with the Third World aspects of Indonesian society—the most challenging of them addressing the fates of 'internal migrants', those travelling from their villages to the national capital seeking a better life—are often about the loss of community, the absence of support from the urban culture, with marginalized, dislocated and only partially employed people clinging to one another in desperation, or existing in relative isolation, or with disturbed senses of space and of time. Finally, there is the issue of politics and the nation. Despite the presence of censorship, including censorship at the script stage, as occurred for much of the Suharto New Order period, and despite the demand for ideological conformity, occurring even today to an extent, filmmakers have engaged with political issues, commonly using allegory—though at times barely disguised allegory—to challenge, satirize and excoriate particular leaders and their policies. These are also issues within Indonesian cinema that deserve attention.

Glossary and Abbreviations

abangan See *santri-abangan*

adat traditional customs, customary law

AMPAI American Motion Picture Association in Indonesia

babad Javanese or Balinese chronicle of past events

Badan Sensor Film Badan Sensor Film (Film Censorship Board). During the New Order the film censorship board was under the administration of the Ministry of Information (Deppen) but currently, as the Lembaga Sensor Film, it is administered from within the Ministry of Education and Culture.

bahasa Betawi also known as Jakarta dialect, originally based on port Malay, *bahasa Betawi* evolved over centuries to become the *lingua franca* of the original Betawi, with their numerous different countries (or regions) of origin

bahasa gaul Jakarta teen language that developed from the 1980s on; the term literally means the language of socializing (*gaul*)

Bakin Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara (State Body for the Coordination of Intelligence)

banjar local community sub-division in Bali, governed by local *adat* but also regulated by the nation-state

Batavia Dutch name for the city that is now called Jakarta

bedhaya Javanese court dance

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Betawi ethnic group regarded as the original working class of Jakarta, the descendants of newcomers (including slaves) brought by the Dutch from the 1620s onwards to populate the newly created centre of trade, and subsequent colonial capital, Batavia

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika 'Unity in Diversity', the national motto of the Republic of Indonesia

Bodhisattva Sanskrit term for one who has sought to achieve enlightenment akin to that of the Buddha

Borobudur massive central Javanese Buddhist monument in the form of a *stupa*. Completed early in the ninth century, its terraced galleries are adorned with bas-relief sculptures illustrating Mahayana Buddhist texts. It stands some 40 km to the north-west of present-day Jogjakarta, while the Hindu temple complex, Prambanan, built half a century or more later, stands some 17 km to the east of the central Jogjakarta area.

candi ancient Hindu or Buddhist temple

Candi Sukuh fifteenth-century late Hindu-Buddhist temple, on Mount Lawu, on the border of Central and East Java, noted for its unusual design and layout, and striking imagery of both sexual and spiritual dimensions. Some of this imagery has similarities with imagery of tantric rituals found in Tibetan Buddhism.

Citra Award the award given in many sectors of achievement at the annual Indonesian Film Festival

Deppen Departemen Penerangan (Ministry of Information); body responsible for regulating the film industry, including censorship, from 1964 until 1999, when it was abolished by President Wahid

didong a participatory performance form found in the Gayo Highlands of Aceh. In the course of the twentieth century it has taken various forms. In recent times it has commonly comprised dance, singing and poetic chanting, performed by teams of men, usually in a circle, and between competing groups.

duduk bersila form of sitting cross-legged on the floor, a posture often used by Indonesian Muslims, but reminiscent of the half lotus position used in yoga and in Buddhist meditation

dwifungsi dual function, the doctrine of the Suharto New Order which gave the Indonesian National Army two functions: to protect the nation but also to govern the country via having representatives in the national parliament, and army personnel working alongside civil servants in key areas

FFI Festival Film Indonesia. Apart from a period of dormancy from 1993 to 2003, due to a decline in the industry in the 1990s, the Indonesian Film Festival, which awards prizes for the best achievements in (primarily) commercial filmmaking under a number of categories, has been conducted under this name since 1973. It was preceded by occasional 'national film appreciation' weeks in the 1950s and 1960s.

G30S Gerakan 30 September (30th September Movement), term referring to the momentous but abortive army purge of the night of 30 September 1965, in which six army generals were murdered. Although estimates have not been confirmed, it is believed that more than 500,000 alleged communists were slaughtered in the army-led response to this event, and many more imprisoned for lengthy gaol terms.

gambang kromong Jakarta-based music using a mixture of Malay and Chinese instruments, including a *gambang* (wooden xylophone-like instrument) and a *kromong* (set of tuned gongs). The music is seen as arising from the acculturation between the Betawi and the local Chinese in earlier centuries.

gamelan ensemble of musical instruments, of indigenous pre-Hindu-Buddhist origin, consisting of metallophones, gongs and drums, played as an orchestra and taking various forms and producing different kinds of music in Java, West Java and Bali

gotong royong mutual cooperation, mutual assistance; cooperation among members of a village or district

Guided Democracy the political order (1959–65) that replaced the parliamentary democracy of the early years of independence, after the parliamentary parties could not agree. Guided Democracy was politically dominated by President Sukarno, who governed via an appointed '*gotong royong*' cabinet.

Hadith a traditional collection of writings conveying the words and actions of the prophet Muhammad

Haji a Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca

IKJ Institut Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Institute of the Arts). Founded in 1970, it has Faculties of Art and Design, Performing Arts, and Film and Television. Numerous well-known directors, writers and film technicians have studied and/or taught at IKJ.

Indo term referring to a person of both indigenous Indonesian and Dutch descent

***Joget* Bali** traditional dance in Bali in which a skilled female dancer, often paid by the village council, invites young men to dance individually

with her, in turn, the spectacle watched by the assembled crowd of villagers

Jogjakarta (also spelled Yogyakarta), city and sultanate in south-central Java, founded after the splitting of Mataram in 1755. Jogjakarta was the seat of the Republican government from early 1946 until 1949, during the period of struggle for independence, and is now a major cultural centre, and market and university town. The region around Jogjakarta was the site of the Java War (1825–30), the first major war of resistance to Dutch colonialism, aspects of which are fictionalized in Teguh Karya's film *November 1828*.

kecak dance creation of the 1930s, based originally on a sacred trance dance, involving layered circles of men chanting, while stories from the *Ramayana* are performed by other dancers

kejawanisasi Javanization

keroncong highly melodious popular song form, using a guitar and/or ukulele as back-up. Influenced by Portuguese music, but suffused with Indonesian idioms as it evolved over centuries, it was especially popular in the first 70 years or so of the twentieth century. The use of *keroncong* songs in 1937 in the highly popular, 'breakthrough', Hollywood-influenced Indonesian film, *Terang Bulan*, signalled some welcome indigenization of content in the nascent film industry.

ketoprak Central Javanese spoken theatre, originating in the early twentieth century, which tells Javanese and other stories, often with stereotyped characters, and includes music and songs, improvisation, jokes and subversive innuendo, and may have a clown as narrator

Kostrad Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Darat (Army Strategic Reserve Command)

kretek cigarette which includes cloves and other spices in its ingredients, the wrapping of which in earlier times may be made from a dried banana leaf

Kyai (also Kiai) Islamic teacher, usually in a *pesantren*

lapau coffee house

Lekra Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Institute for People's Culture), a left-wing arts organization founded in the 1950s by left-wing intellectuals. Due to links with the Communist Party it was banned in the aftermath of the events of 30 September 1965.

lenong Betawi Betawi comic theatre, using music and much banter between the characters

Mahabharata Hindu Sanskrit epic, narrating the histories of the descendants of Bharata, culminating in the story of the war between the Kurawas and the Pandawas. Elements of this story are retold in Javanese and Balinese *wayang* dance drama and puppet theatre.

Majapahit East Javanese Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with considerable political influence and power in neighbouring regions and outer islands, eventually disintegrating with the increasing power of north coastal Islamic states

mamak the mother's eldest brother, who is the formal head of the family in matrilineal Minangkabau society

Mataram kingdom in Central Java from the late sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, which reached its height under Sultan Agung (1613–45). An Islamic sultanate, its power declined with the increasing incursions of the Dutch East India Company, culminating in the division of its remaining territory between the sultanates of Jogjakarta and Surakarta in 1755. An earlier Mataram was a Hindu state in the eighth century.

Minangkabau matrilineal ethnic group, comprising 90% of the population of West Sumatra, in which, under *adat* rules, the mother owns the hereditary family home and subsistence rice farming land

mudra positioning of the fingers held up as a gesture of worship

mufakat deliberation with the aim of arriving at consensus

Muhammadiyah reforming modernist Muslim organization founded in 1912; extensively involved in education and social welfare as well as religion. Unlike the traditionalist Muslim organization, NU, it has not involved itself directly in politics.

musyawarah meeting, ideally involving exhaustive deliberation, where, as in *mufakat*, a consensus is reached

nafsu desire, instinctive drive

Nasakom Nationalisme, Agama, Kommunisme; a state ideology advocated by President Sukarno during the Guided Democracy period, encouraging cooperation between nationalists, religious groups ('Agama') and communists

New Order *Orde Baru*, term referring to the political regime established by General Suharto whose presidency lasted some 31 years (1967–98). New Order power in effect commenced with the liquidation of the left in Indonesia, after the attempted army purge of 30 September 1965. The New Order regime governed with the support of the army and the increased power of security organizations, together with international

support from First World nations. Fundamental to its policy was economic development (*pembangunan*), but the regime is also known for its cronyism, corruption, and human rights abuses.

NU Nahdlatul Ulama, traditionalist Sunni Muslim organization with a very large membership (more than 40 million), which, among its various activities, conducts numerous *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). In contrast to the modernist Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, it has at times functioned as a political party, particularly in the 1960s.

padepokan traditional Javanese term for a place of retreat for meditation or learning of use to the community. Used by director Teguh Karya as a generic term to describe his Teater Populer workshop.

Pancasila national philosophy consisting of five main principles, enunciated by Sukarno in June 1945 as the basis of the future Indonesian state

PAPFIAS Panitia Aksi Pemboikotan Film Imperialis Amerika Serikat (Committee of Action for the Boycott of Imperialist American Films)

Partai Golkar Golongan Karya, political party set up early in the New Order by the Suharto regime

Partai Demokrasi Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI/ PDI-P), initially a party into which other political parties were amalgamated in 1973, early in the New Order, as the number of political parties was reduced by government fiat. In 1998 the Megawati Sukarnoputri splinter group in the party formed the 'Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle' (PDI-P), which currently has considerable political influence in Indonesia.

Partai Komunis Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), Indonesian Communist Party, founded in 1920 and formally banned in March 1966. Its membership increased substantially in the 1950s, making it a significant force during the Guided Democracy period.

Partai Nasional Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), initially the name for a party founded by Sukarno in 1927, it re-emerged as a new party in 1945 and was a significant political force, particularly in the 1950s, drawing its support from civil servants and *abangan* working class. Under the New Order it was merged in 1973 into the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia.

Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party – PPP), Islamic political party formed in 1973 out of a range of other Muslim parties

pencak silat Indonesian martial arts/arts of self-defence, involving high levels of skills achieved through training, and usually having a psychological and related philosophical basis

pepatah adat oral culture aphorisms and maxims based on customary law (*adat*) in the Minangkabau region

peranakan a term applying to non-indigenous people, who have been born in Indonesia or the Malay peninsula, their families often having been settled there for generations, hence, for example, the term 'Peranakan Chinese'

PFN Perusahaan Film Negara (State Film Corporation), which included among its productions in the 1950s works by left-wing directors

pesantren Islamic boarding school with a focus on Islamic learning

Prambanan Hindu temple complex, construction of which commenced in the mid-ninth century. It originally consisted of 240 temples and shrines, only a portion of which survive today. The largest of these, the central Shiva temple, is decorated with wall reliefs illustrating stories from the *Ramayana*. The temple complex is located some 17 km to the east of present-day Jogjakarta.

PPFN Pusat Produksi Film Negara (State Film Production Centre), which in the 1980s produced a number of New Order propaganda films

Poedjangga Baroe ('New Poet'), the most influential literary journal of the decade prior to the invasion of the Japanese in early 1942. One of its founding editors, Sutan Takdir Alisyabana, advocated a future Indonesian nation largely predicated on modern Western ideas, a position contested by those valuing Indonesian traditions.

pribumi indigenous Indonesian

priyayi traditional, largely hereditary, Javanese bureaucratic aristocracy

Pusat Perfilman Pusat Perfilman H. Usmar Ismail (Film Center H. Usmar Ismail), established in the mid 1970s by the Jakarta City Council, in Jalan Rasuna Said, Central Jakarta, as a centre for film institutions. Among the organizations currently based here are the feature film archive (Sinematek Indonesia), PARFI (the Indonesian Film Artists' Association) and the Indonesian Film Center.

rakyat the people, the common people, the masses

Ramayana Hindu Sanskrit epic narrating the story of King Rama and particularly the abduction of his faithful wife, Sita, by Rawanna, the King of Langka

Reformasi period of reform in Indonesia that began with the fall of Suharto in May 1998 and has resulted in regular elections, decentralization of power and finances, and relative freedom of the press

reog Ponorogo spectacular dance involving combat between a large tiger-mask crowned with peacock feathers, and its antagonist, sometimes accompanied by hobby horse trance dancing, and by clown figures. A dance that can be interpreted in numerous ways, it originated in the East Javanese town of Ponorogo, a town with a reputation for asserting its independence and refusing to be dominated by any centralizing power.

romusha term for those conscripted into forced labour under the Japanese occupation

ronggeng social dance commonly found in Java, where a paid performer invites men to dance with her

rukun tetangga (literally 'harmony of neighbours'), a term used for a neighbourhood administrative unit introduced by the Japanese during the occupation, and officially retained in 1954 as a means of facilitating both local participation in government projects and control of the population

santri-abangan a distinction between aliran (class and religious groupings in Java), popularized by Clifford Geertz, based on his research in East Java in the 1950s. *Santri* has been used to refer to pious Muslims. *Abangan* refers to a person, usually of peasant or working-class origin, who may be nominally Muslim but adheres to pre-Islamic animist and/or Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and superstitions. Over time these terms have shifted in meaning as class and religious groupings and affiliations alter. These shifts are discussed in M.C. Ricklefs' *Islamisation and its Opponents in Java*.

Sinematek Sinematek Indonesia, a film archive established in 1976 by the Jakarta governor, Ali Sadikin, with former film director, Misbach Yusa Biran, as its founding director. Sinematek Indonesia is the main film archive dedicated to preserving feature films in Indonesia. *See also* Pusat Perfilman.

suku/suku bangsa ethnic or ethno-linguistic group

Sundanese the main ethnic group in West Java, constituting about 40 million people and having its own regional language and dialects

surau small Islamic place of instruction and worship, especially in Sumatra

Taman Siswa (literally 'students' garden'), educational association that in the early 1920s founded schools that aimed to educate the children of ordinary people in ways that combined modern educational concepts with traditional Javanese values

Teater Populer name for theatre group and later film production collective established in the late 1960s by Teguh Karya. In the 1970s and 1980s the group produced numerous prize-winning films.

TIM Taman Ismail Marzuki, an important cultural centre in Jakarta, established in 1968 by the Jakarta City Council, in Jalan Cikini Raya, Central Jakarta, and inaugurated in 1968. At the rear is the office of the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Council), and behind this are the grounds of the Jakarta Institute of the Arts (Institut Kesenian Jakarta).

warok a term referring to a kind of strong man, initially associated with the town of Ponorogo in East Java, who might act as an advisor to a ruler, but who was noted for both his skills in martial arts and spiritual strength based in mysticism, but who existed apart from the establishment and had an unconventional lifestyle. In contemporary times this charismatic figure, now sanitized, is associated with the lead dancer in *reog Ponorogo*.

warung small wayside eating house

wayang Javanese puppet theatre, usually telling stories from the Hindu *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics

wayang kulit shadow puppetry, in which finely crafted flat puppets made of leather (*kulit*) appear silhouetted on a screen, usually representing characters and stories from the Hindu epics

wayang wong Javanese dance drama with stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*

PANCASILA

KETUHANAN YANG MAHA ESA

KEMANUSIAAN YANG ADIL DAN BERADAB

PERSATUAN INDONESIA

KERAKYATAN YANG DIPIMPIN OLEH HIKMAT KEBIJAK-SANAAN DALAM PERMUSYAWARATAN / PERWAKILAN

KEADILAN SOSIAL BAGI SELURUH RAKYAT INDONESIA

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'Careful scholarship, deep understanding of cinema and a keen historical consciousness are vitally present in this manuscript. A fine perceptiveness and deeply felt humanism enliven its pages. This book will prove to be an invaluable resource to scholars of cinema, Asian studies, cultural studies, visual anthropology, media studies, political science, and international relations.'
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'With meticulous research and great sensitivity regarding the multitudes of Indonesian cultures, David Hanan's book elegantly provides a panoramic yet analytic view of this vital aspect of Indonesian cinema. Readers will get an insider-like perspective as Hanan has long had cordial relations with key persons in the Indonesian film world.'
—**Dr Budi Irawanto**, Associate Professor of Communications, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta; Director, Jogja-Netpac Asian Film Festival

This book explores ways in which diverse regional cultures in Indonesia and their histories have been expressed in film since the early 1950s. It also explores underlying cultural dominants within the new nation, established at the end of 1949 with the achievement of independence from Dutch colonialism. It sees these dominants—for example forms of group body language and forms of consultation—not simply as a product of the nation, but as related to unique and long standing formations and traditions in the numerous societies in the Indonesian archipelago, on which the nation is based. Nevertheless, the book is not concerned only with past traditions, but explores ways in which Indonesian filmmakers have addressed, critically, distinctive aspects of their traditional societies in their feature films (including at times the social position of women), linking past to the present, where relevant, in dynamic ways.

David Hanan is Adjunct Senior Research Associate in Film and Screen Studies at Monash University, Australia. He has published widely on Indonesian cinema, including articles in the *East-West Film Journal*, and the Cornell University journal, *Indonesia*. He was the editor of *Film in South East Asia: Views from the Region* (2001), and has subtitled numerous films at the request of the Indonesian National Film Council.

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Garin Nugroho and crew filming a scene for *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (English title: 'And the Moon Dances'), SET Film Workshop and National Film Council, 1995. (Courtesy of Garin Nugroho).

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